

INSIDE

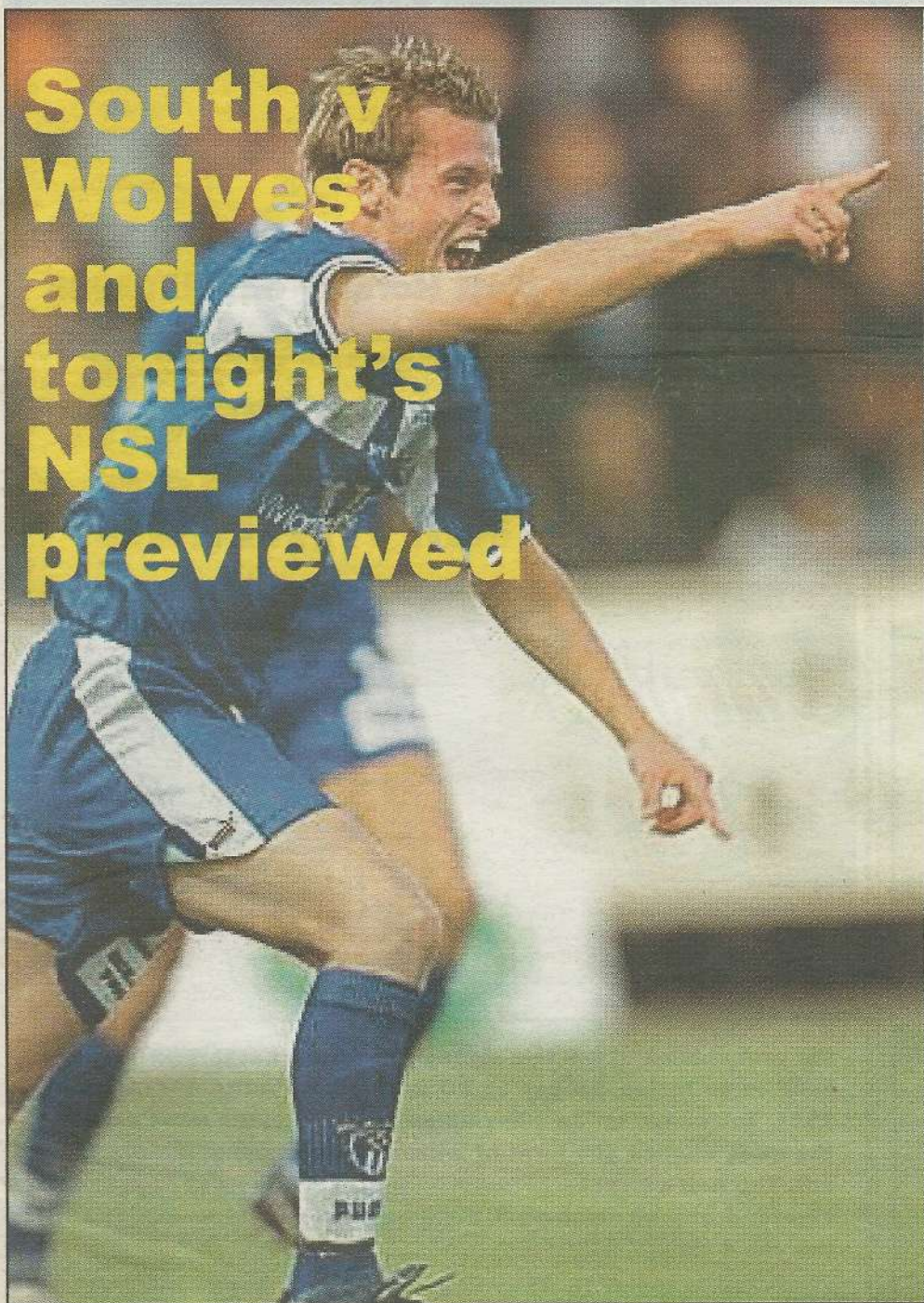
SOCCER

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**South v
Wolves
and
tonight's
NSL
previewed**



By Greg Blake

For just a brief second an already simmering and pressured Ange Postecoglou appeared ready to explode into action.

"Are you worried that you might embarrass us?" a first-season NSL beat reporter from a Melbourne daily had asked - in his thick English accent, no less - as the discussion turned to South Melbourne's historic trip to Brazil for the inaugural World Club Championship next month.

Even media colleagues of the scribe privately winced at the sheer audacity of the question.

And the words hung in the air.

Postecoglou, normally the NSL's most placid and poker-faced coach, shifted in his seat, grimaced and, save for his steely sideways glance, drew his head back from the media gathered at the press conference following last Thursday night's clash between South Melbourne and Wollongong.

And his eyes told the story.

"I'd be very surprised if we embarrassed anybody," he responded tersely, voice raised perceptibly, and that was that.

But he was steaming, and had Postecoglou been any one of a number of other coaches around the league the focus of his fury might have ended up in a particularly ugly situation.

The mood was tense but Postecoglou kept his composure.

Given his club's tepid league form of late it probably wasn't easy.

Only later, when he had gathered his thoughts, did he reveal his contempt for the nature of the reporter's question.

"Embarrass who, him?" Postecoglou still bristled more than half

an hour later, pointing a dismissive finger towards the now empty chair in the media area.

"Of course it does anger me, it very much angers me," he said of the scribe's line of questioning.

"How can we embarrass somebody if we have rightfully earned this?"

"Who are we embarrassing anyway?"

"We are going over there for an unbelievable opportunity that has never been offered to any club on this side of the world and I really believe that people should be encouraging our boys to get over there and enjoy this.

"It's just a fantastic moment and a fantastic thing.

"The questions about Brazil are quite annoying really.

"It's almost like people are saying 'well, you're not doing well in the league and you're going to embarrass us' and it's like we don't deserve to be there.

"But you had to win last year's competition to be there.

"You don't have to be on the top of the ladder at the end of December to get to Brazil; it's not achieved by winning five or six games.

"It's achieved by a whole season of hard work and success, so regardless of how we're going this year we deserve to be there.

"If people don't appreciate that fact or feel that we're going to let people down then I do get annoyed with that sort of attitude.

"No club deserves to be there more than us.

"We've won the last two years of this competition and as far as I know no-one has won this year's competition - unless they've done it on the sly - so I do get annoyed.

Continued page three

**Plus: Nick Theodorakopoulos, Jacob Burns, Aussies Abroad,
John Aloisi, Vilson Knezevic, Eddie Bosnar, Raul Blanco,
Anissa Tann-Darby and NSW Super League: SEE YOU IN 2000!**

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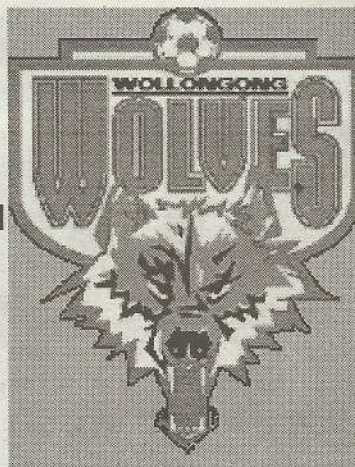
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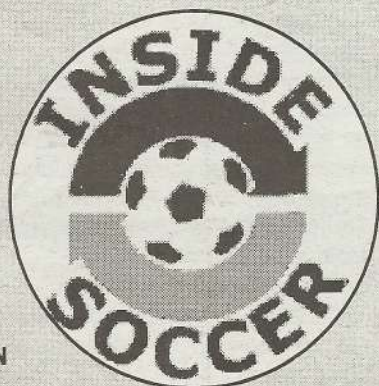
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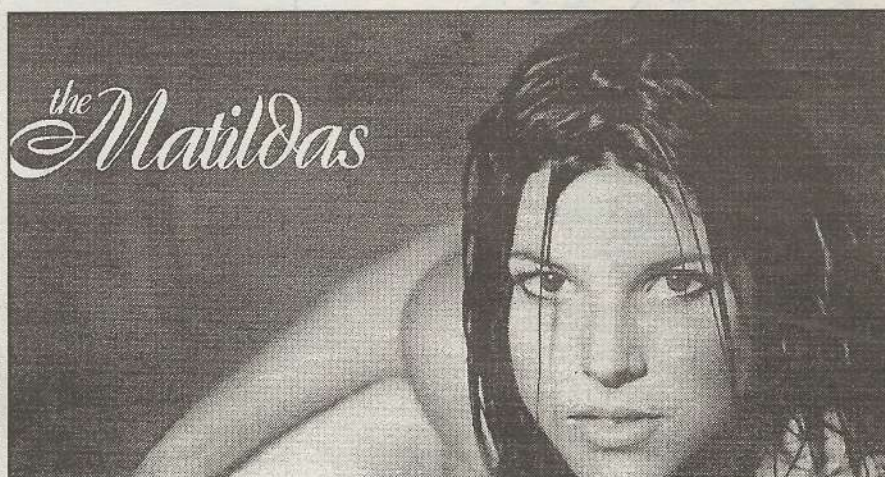
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Continued from front page

"The fact that we're struggling a little bit here at the moment has got zero relevance to how we are going to perform over there and I think most media scribes are a little more intelligent than that.

"They (the media) should just be getting behind us and saying to just go ahead and enjoy the experience.

"If all a sudden someone came in here and said that we were playing well and so we must fancy ourselves against Manchester United I'd treat that question with the same contempt as the question that I had.

"It is just not relevant."

The pressure is mounting on Postecoglou and his players. His team, now more than two games off the top six pace, is treading water with a taxing regular season schedule to come after the Brazil journey.

And as much from within as without it would seem, having shared the walk up the tunnel with the players after the Wollongong game.

The last comment from one of the supporters in the darkness with faces pressed up against the cyclone wire fencing echoed off the concrete walls.

"F--- you, Postecoglou," the voice thundered.

"More than any other year I just don't think people want to see us win the league this time," believes South Melbourne's record-breaking coach.

"I don't think the opposition wants to see us win the league, I don't think anyone involved in the game wants us to win

the league for a variety of reasons.

"Three in a row would probably not be good for the other clubs.

"The reward at the end of it, these World Club Championships, I think they would like to see other people share in it.

"Some of the media - maybe all the media - I think they'd prefer to see somebody else apart from us next year.

"I'm not saying there is a conspiracy there of people trying to stop us but I do believe that the general mentality of people is that 'well, they've won it twice, they are going to Brazil, what else do they want?'

"They want somebody else to win it and for us to overcome all that firstly there has to be acceptance of that by all the players and then be absolutely dogged and focused in everything we do and not let them knock us off what we're trying to achieve."

Postecoglou knows the team's performances in Brazil and the follow-up in the taxing NSL campaign to come on

return will reflect on him, irrespective of what has come before.

But he stands

by his impressive record and refuses to entertain suggestions that he or the club has faltered in recruiting or any other area in the race for an historic 'three-peat' title win.

"I have no regrets about what we've done this year," he declared.

"From the start of the year I have been working to a set formula; one that I think has been successful, will be successful and I will continue to do that.

"If that doesn't work I will not change my ways.

"It will be another coach that comes in and makes changes, but I believe in consistency, loyalty and a flow-on effect in terms of getting some sort of feeling around the place that people belong.

"I don't think you can get that if you're chopping and changing even every two or three years.

"From day one I've tried to ingrain the history of the club and the culture of the club into every player that comes here and it takes time to do that and I've always thought bringing in new players all the time gives a mixed message.

"They're my ways and whether they're right, wrong or otherwise I'm sticking to them."

In the meantime it's on to Brazil and an event Postecoglou believes will be the experience of the footballing lives of many of his charges.

"They will be walking in out in front of maybe 160,000 people to play against the likes of Romario, Edmundo and Beckham.





South coach Ange Postecoglou has slammed some sections of the Melbourne press for not having enough faith in the back-to-back champions. The squad leaves this Sunday for Brazil.

"They are going to be playing out of their skins, they will run until they drop.

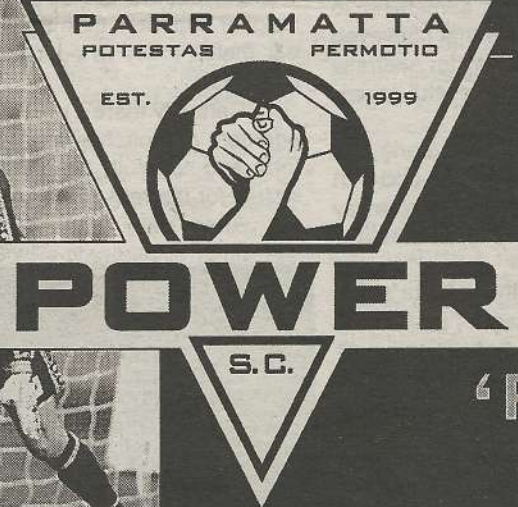
"For all of them they see it as a fantastic opportunity and everyone will lift, I'm sure of that.

"We will play this competition as well as we possibly can."

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JACOB BURNS: THE REAL THING



Jacob Burns (left) with his Power colleagues Socceroo Milan Blagojevic (right) and current Olyroo Mile 'Mim' Sterjovski. Power plays Olympic tonight at Parra Stadium.

The Bankstown district has been a prolific production line for Australian football over the years. The Madden family, Gary Phillips, Gary Manuel, Robbie Slater, Greg Byles, Ray Rootsey, Larry Armytage and Terry Greedy are part of the endless list of players who learned their football in this football fertile part of Sydney.

Following in this tradition is Jacob Burns, the Parramatta and Olyroo midfielder and wing back, who many good judges believe will reach the top of his chosen profession.

What is so striking about Burns is his resemblance, in both physical appearance and technical ability, to former Sydney City and Socceroo player Kevin Mullen.

Mullen, also a Greenacre junior, began his career in midfield but switched to an overlapping fullback role during his early days in the professional ranks.

The year 2000 is a pivotal one for Jacob Burns as he attempts to realise his goal to play in the Olympics and seek fame and fortune overseas.

In this interview with Roger Sleeman, Jacob Burns talks about his life in professional football, the Olympic dream and his ambitions to play abroad.

ROGER SLEEMAN: As a young player, were you aware of the great football tradition in the Bankstown district?

JACOB BURNS: I played for Bankstown representative sides in U/11 and U/12s, and we were reminded of the great success the district had achieved in junior representative football.

My decision to play football, rather than rugby league and tennis, which I also excelled in, was obviously due to the strength of the sport in the district.

Although I enjoyed other sports, football was my real passion.

R.S. When did you know you had the ability to make a career in football?

J.B. Fortunately I was selected to represent N.S.W from U/13-U15 level so at that point I knew I had something to strive for. It was at this time that I believed I could fulfill my dream to play for Australia and eventually build a successful career overseas.

I had been inspired at an early age by the exploits of Craig Johnston and with so many players earning their living away from Australia today, it's only natural you want to try your luck.

Playing with me in those state sides were Steve Laybutt (J-league) and Lucas Neill (Milwall) who are both doing well overseas, so I'm hoping I can achieve the same.

R.S. A feature of your play is the ability to get close to defenders and either beat them or lay balls off to your teammates in space. Was this a result of coaching or simply natural ability?

J.B. As a junior I loved to take on players and try and beat them. I wouldn't attribute this to any particular coaching but just the style of attacking I've employed for so many years.

However, don't think it's easy being a ball player because the game is very physical and you really have to be thinking a couple of seconds ahead of your opponent and pick the right option so you don't get caught in possession.

R.S. Unlike some players, you're very strong on both sides of your body which enables you to play on either side of the pitch. Is this one of the reasons for your rapid progress in the game?

J.B. I always knew it was important to be strong on both feet. It gives you extra time on the ball and when early balls to strikers are required you don't have to think about changing feet if you favour a particular side.

When I go overseas it's going to be a big advantage when coaches know I can play on either side of the park and this factor could ultimately determine my ability to

gain a contract.

R.S. Do you score enough goals from midfield?

J.B. In my previous two seasons in the N.S.L., I only scored eight goals and this year I haven't scored at all.

Sure, I'd like to score more but it often depends on the role I'm given. Last match against Sydney United I was playing deep on the left of midfield and was instructed to assist Steve Eggleton in curbing support to Tommy Pondeljak.

I rarely ventured forward until late in the second half when Ahmed Elrich played a square ball to me inside the box which I unfortunately hit straight at the keeper.

The bottom line is, if I can create chances for our strikers and they can score, I'm happy to be part of the team effort.

Perhaps if I get the chance to play overseas I will have to improve my goal scoring performance but for the moment every point we pick up at Parramatta Power is vital for our top six chances, so my contribution to the team plan is what really counts.

R.S. Parramatta is currently lying in ninth place on the table, five points out of the six. Is there strong pressure on the coaching staff and the players from within the club for the team to lift its performance, and what do you see as the answer to the team's dilemma?

J.B. Let's hope we turned the corner with our win against Sydney United. If we can record a run of wins, everything can change, but we couldn't have chosen a tougher opponent than Sydney Olympic in our match today to continue the winning sequence.

Certainly there's pressure from management on coaches and players to perform and hopefully we can be more consistent for the rest of the season.

After early season problems in

the twenty man Olyroo squad for the four team tournament in Adelaide next month.

Do you think your inclusion is a strong indication Blanco will select you for Sydney 2000?

J.B. It's certainly an encouraging sign but nobody is really guaranteed selection because there are so many good players available. Blatsis and Curcija will be in Brazil with South Melbourne and you'd have to say they will be in the final squad barring injury.

If I can play well in Adelaide it won't do my chances any harm but it's really up to me on the day. I've been setting my sights on the Olympics for the last two years so I intend to grab the opportunity with both hands.

R.S. Raul Blanco has been using you as a wing back for the Olyroo team? How do you find this role compared to your normal midfield duties and who are your main rivals for this position in the squad?

J.B. In the midfield I'm able to play deep and hold possession but the wing back role requires great versatility in coming forward quickly and also carrying out defensive duties when your opponents have possession.

The main competitors for selection are Emerton, Baser and Neil but my ability to operate on both sides gives me a big advantage.

R.S. If you don't play at Sydney 2000 will your dreams be shattered?

J.B. It would be a big disappointment but it won't be the end of the world. Some players have gone on to bigger and better things after not playing for Australia in their early years.

Look how successful Robbie Slater became after not making the 1983 W.Y.C. squad.

At the moment I'm only thinking positives so the thought of not making the final squad hasn't entered my mind.



Jacob Burns and Mile Sterjovski celebrate the latter's goal in the 1999 Grand Final. South beat United 3-2 in a classic game.

defence, we're now experiencing a lack of goals but this is partly due to opposing teams putting large numbers behind the ball and hoping to win by the odd goal on the counter attack.

The match against Newcastle was a good example where we dominated but couldn't penetrate the nine man defence, only to see Buonavoglia score in one of the Breakers' rare attacks which gave them maximum points.

The likely return of Joel Griffiths to the starting line up today will be a big plus in the goal scoring department.

R.S. Raul Blanco has named you in

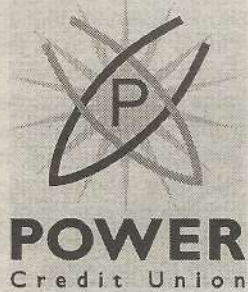
R.S. At the end of the current N.S.L. campaign you're going for trials in Europe. Which countries are you looking at and how is Parramatta Power viewing the situation?

J.B. Because I can't obtain a work permit in the UK., I'm looking at Belgium, France and Spain. I suppose a problem will only occur with Parramatta if I gain a contract overseas but the club has assured me it won't stand in my way if I do make the grade.

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ACKERLEY'S PANTHERS READY TO POUNCE

AIDAN ORMOND takes a look at the Panthers and Demons in the lead-up to next month's Super League start

Penrith Panthers coach and former Manchester United player Stan Ackerley is reasonably happy with his side's pre-season. The results have been a little patchy but he has signed six new names, who he believes will help the outer-west Sydney club achieve their target of a mid-table finish in this their first season up from division one.

"I've signed Martin Driene, Antony Driene, Jason Lewis, Sandro Borasto and a few other lads. The thing is, most of these players have commitments at this time of the year and their plans were made before the decision to go to a summer competition was made, so we just have to make the best of it," he said.

"If we can consolidate in this first season in Super League I'll be extremely happy. A halfway finish would be great. Remember it is a young squad - and last year I utilized 28 first grade players - so that is why I have signed some older boys to give us that buffer."

Penrith Panthers have come from nowhere in six years to make it to the state's highest competition, and one of the

factors in this rapid success is the seemingly endless array of young talent in the Penrith district.

An estimated 6,000 young players are playing soccer in the area.

"I've lived here for thirty years, but when I've coached in Sydney some have said 'I've got no players'. I say to them 'come up to Penrith'. We have given the players in the Penrith district a chance. We even have a young committee. People are starting to take notice of that fact that we are a community club giving youth of the area a chance to play top flight football."

Ackerley knows a thing or two about youth schemes, having come through Manchester United during the fifties. His six years at the club impressed on him the emphasis on young players, some in fact were to become the 'Busby Babes' before tragedy robbed the club of a number of these players.

From a fans' perspective Penrith is a booming area of Sydney. A recent home game against Parramatta Power pulled close to 6,000. Ackerley believes that by February - after the holiday period - the club can attract crowds of up to 2,000.

And he predicts that the area can return to the NSL at some point in the future.

Not too long ago Penrith City was in the national league and attracted healthy attendances playing while playing at nearby St Marys.

Being located at Penrith's Rugby League stadium, close

to one of the largest social clubs in Australia, Penrith Panthers, would give the Panthers an opportunity to attract massive crowds.

"Saturday night games at Penrith Stadium, with its wonderful floodlighting, would be ideal. We could pull 10,000," Ackerley predicted.

The club is currently negotiating with the Penrith Rugby League stadium for this season, but will use the Andrews Rd ground until then.

Meanwhile a short drive down the expressway to Blacktown, and canny Scot Brian Brown is plotting another successful campaign for the Grand Final winners.

"I am very satisfied so far," he said of the lead-up to kick-off on January 8 and 9. "I've opted for an easy pre-season build-up on the basis that next year we will go straight through with back-to-back seasons."

"While other clubs have been training four nights a week, we have been doing just two with an extra session on the weekend."

"Our lead-up games have actually showed that we have come home strong in the last 15 minutes, so perhaps the approach is working."

"I believe a pre-season longer than five weeks can be too much," said Brown, confirming what a number of NSL coaches have said.

The coaching staff at the club, Tommy McMorrow, Phil McMullen and Brown spent the off-season planning this difficult season for the Grand Final winners, and came up with some potential signings that have ended up at Gabbie Stadium.

Paul Richardson, journeyman Paul Dee, young Marconi striker Mark Hagger and Nayoki Imaya have all signed with the ambitious west Sydney side.



Brown (above) is adamant that the team spirit at the club is the key to its past success and any future championships.

"Any great side in the world has togetherness and that's what Blacktown has. And it's not just with the players, it's all the support staff and administration coming together to make the club strong."

An added touch of professionalism comes in the form of training gear supplied by City's sponsors. "Everything will be there for the players, they don't have to bring anything, further underlining the club's unity on the park."

Blacktown is the side everyone loves to beat and this year Brown expects that to be no different. "Sides like to come to Gabbie Stadium, they lift their game on the smooth surface."

"They get an extra leg when they play here. I think what we have to do is learn how to play against sides we are expected to beat."

Blacktown plays away to Eastern Suburbs in the season opener on 9 January. It should be a tough game for the Champions, with Easts significantly strengthening their squad with the likes of Sharpley, Pillemer and Segreto brought in by coach John Calleja.

In fact Brown and a number of the Demons players will be catching up with some good Super League friends by visiting an Easts New Year's Eve get-together. Should be an interesting night!

In other Super League news ... NSW Fed, as reported last week, has signed Sapphire Technology as a sponsor.

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RAUL BLANCO'S YEAR OF LIVING FAMOUSLY

By Aidan Ormond

Type Raul Blanco into any Internet search engine and you'll probably come up with a plethora of sites dedicated to Real Madrid's pin-up striker 'Raul', otherwise known as Raul Gonzales Blanco.

Dig long enough and you'll find another Raul Blanco, the Soccer Australia

coach of the Olyroos.

1999 has been a big year for Blanco. Coaching the national team in some high-profile games (all-stars and Manchester United) while simultaneously running the Olympic squad for much of the year has also kept the media shy Blanco in the headlines.

In fact his Olyroos were the talk of the UK press after their 4-1 demolition of Southampton a few months ago in

England.

"Yes, it's been a great year," Blanco said on Christmas Eve at his family home. "To be able to do both jobs makes it a special year in anyone's coaching life."

His memories of coaching the national team in the official opening of stadium Australia ranks up there with his best of the last 12 months.

"Yes, to have coached what I con-



Raul Blanco: this year has been significant for him but history will judge him on his Sydney 2000 performances.

BOSNAR REGAINS HIS (OLYMPIC) SPIRIT



Eddie Bosnar is thankful for his move from Northern Spirit to Sydney United. If it

wasn't for the Pumas throwing his career a lifeline the 1999 Young Soccerroo probably would not have been picked for the Olyroos for the upcoming four-nation tournament in Adelaide.

"It's fun coming out to play. Yeah, I'm really enjoying my football again and playing alongside an experienced campaigner like Velimir Kupresak and having David Ratcliffe as coach has really helped.

"And once you are working hard success will come which builds confidence."

Bosnar (pictured above) was a fringe

player at a star-packed Northern Spirit last year, although an appearance for Australia at WYC '99 was some consolation.

"If I wasn't playing regular first team football it may have been difficult for Raul to pick me. I'll have to send David Ratcliffe a leg of ham for Christmas!" he joked.

Coming from one of the glamour clubs of Australian football to one of our more down-to-earth sides has had its benefits for Bosnar.

"It's the best move I have ever made. If you do well at Sydney United then they will back you and give you confidence. It's a great club with no superstars. It's up to yourself after that.

"This opportunity with the Olyroos is probably my only chance to show what I

can do because Blatsis will probably be back after the Manchester United games.

Before the Olyroos in January there is the tonight's game at home to South Melbourne. The irony is that if Sydney United had beaten them in last year's Grand Final, Bosnar would be playing Manchester United instead of being in the Olympic U/23s.

"It's a must-win game for us. They may be thinking about other things so who knows."

And who knows, maybe Bosnar can make a late charge for a spot at the Olympics - marking Olyroo Michael Curcija out of tonight's game would do his chances no harm.

Aidan Ormond

sider to be the best Australian team on the night they opened the doors to soccer was pretty special for me.

"And obviously to win made it even more memorable, although pressure is always there when you coach a national team, but it's something you learn to deal with," he said.

Given Frank Farina's baptism of fire with the national team in November, I wondered how the affable Blanco dealt with the delicate egos of some of our Soccerroo stars?

"I am always very respectful of what our star players have achieved in the years they have been in Europe.

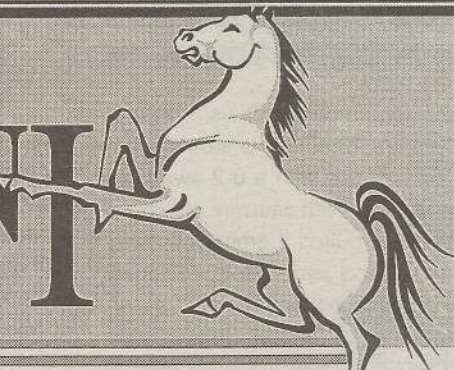
"Perhaps I was in a better position given that virtually all of them have been members of the U/20s and U/17s sides that I have been involved in.

Continued on page 22

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AUSSIES on the world stage

A round-up of how our Aussies players fared abroad in this last week ...

It was a relatively quiet week for Aussies Abroad with a number of European leagues taking a well-earned break during the Christmas period. Many leagues, such as Germany and Croatia, are going into hibernation for a few weeks to escape the cold, snow covered pitches and other winter factors not conducive to good football.

That is certainly not the case for our compatriots in the United Kingdom where they played a full round on the weekend and are gearing up for a heavy schedule over the New Year period.

The mid-week FA Cup game featured Aussies when Blackburn Rovers played, and beat, West Bromwich Albion. The 2-1 Blackburn extra time win was a disappointment for West Brom duo of Jason Van Blerk, who played the full game, and Andrew McDermott, who came on in the 90th minute and received a caution soon after. John Filan, Blackburn's custodian, wasn't included in his team's squad.

In another mid-week game Rangers had a 1-0 home victory over Hearts in a Scottish Premier League game to go four points clear of Mark Viduka's Celtic. Tony Vidmar showed his versatility by starting the game in the right wing back role - his normal position for the Australian national team. He has previously played in the left wing back role and central defence for the Scottish champions. Vidmar was not able to celebrate the win with his team-mates at the end of the game as he was replaced in the 45th minute after taking a heavy knock earlier in the game.

Craig Moore started the game in his customary central defence role and played the full game.

The Scottish Premier League games were played on Monday (after Inside Soccer went to press) and featured the biggest game on the Scottish football calendar - Rangers v Celtic - setting up an

interesting clash between Moore and his Australian team-mate Viduka.

Meanwhile the Rangers duo could find themselves in a Harry Kewell type of controversy soon with an edict from their club boss, Dick Advocaat, that the players must put club before country (see story below).

In weekend action in the English Premier League both Aussie 'keepers Mark Bosnich and Mark Schwarzer were in goals for their respective teams, Manchester United and Middlesbrough.

In front of a sold out Old Trafford Bosnich made a quicker than expected return from injury against Bradford who barely had a sight of Bosnich's goal throughout the 90 minutes as United scored four late goals without reply.

Schwarzer wasn't as fortunate as he played soundly in his team's 1-0 away loss to bottom placed Sheffield Wednesday.

Our Young Harry was again instrumental in some of the best parts of Leeds' 2-1 home victory over Leicester City as they continue to lead the Premier League by two points. Kewell was the creator of the first goal scored by Michael Bridges.

Richard Johnson's stay in the Premier League could be short indeed as Watford sink deeper towards the First Division after another walloping to the tune of 4-0 at the hands of Tottenham. Johnson played a full game but could do little to halt the David Ginola inspired raids of the home team.

In the Nationwide Division One, Shaun Murphy's Sheffield United continued their resurgence with a 0-2 away win over Birmingham. With Murphy playing a full game United pulled themselves away from the relegation zone after previously being amongst the bottom three.

Craig Foster's Crystal Palace, who were also moving away from the relegation zone a few weeks ago, are now sinking back down towards the bottom after



Kevin Muscat ... a full game for Wolverhampton but a yellow card as well

another defeat, this time by 2-1 at high flying Charlton. Foster was replaced after 75 minutes while Nick Rizzo came in the 69th minute.

Crewe is another team dragging itself away from the relegation zone - with Jason Kearton in goals they had a credible 1-1 home draw with previous leaders Huddersfield.

The new leaders, Manchester City, took over from Huddersfield after a good 0-2 away win over West Brom. Danny Tiatto came on in the 25th minute and fed a perfect pass to his striker Goater who, with the Albion defence caught flat-footed, lashed a low well-placed shot past 'keeper Miller. Jason Van Blerk played the full game for West Brom and received a caution.

Another Aussie to receive a caution

was noted hardman Kevin Muscat whose team Wolverhampton was beaten 3-2 away at Stockport. Fellow Aussie Steve Corica remained on the bench for the Wolves.

In a 1-1 draw between bottom team Swindon and Portsmouth Frank Talia was in goals for the former but Andy Peterson remained on the bench for third from bottom Portsmouth.

In the Nationwide Division Two, Millwall's surge for the top received a temporary setback when they were beaten 1-0 away to second placed Bristol Rovers. Both Tim Cahill and Lucas Neill played full games for Millwall who are now in fourth position only six points from the leaders, Wigan, although they have played one game more than those above them on the table.

RANGERS TO BAN MOORE AND VIDMAR



Craig Moore ... heading for a Harry Kewell like controversy.

In Leeds United style Rangers coach Dick Advocaat has stirred the pot with an edict to his players that they must put the club ahead of the demands that their countries put on them.

Advocaat has delivered a stern warning that any player who puts his country first will jeopardise his Ibrox career.

Advocaat's shock outburst follows the revelation that Rangers could be without the services of three key players - American Claudio Reyna and Australians Craig Moore and Tony Vidmar - for the entire month of February.

Reyna is certain to miss what may prove to be a crucial part of the season after being ordered to report for training with the United States squad next month while his Rangers team-mates are on their winter break in Florida.

Advocaat persuaded Reyna to put pressure on the US federation not to call on his services previously at the time of his move to Rangers in March this year.

But now the coach's hands are tied and he confirmed: "Reyna will be training with the national squad in LA when we are in America because they have a game against Ireland in January.

"He will also miss four other games in February because the Americans have a tournament which runs until the 27th of the month. The American schedule is unbelievable but there is nothing I can do about that. I was aware they had a lot of friendlies when I signed Reyna and I told the player it was up to him."

Advocaat was further irritated last week when he received a letter from the Australian FA informing Rangers they have friendlies in Chile for three weeks in February and requesting the services of Moore and Vidmar.

Advocaat, clearly infuriated, said: "I find this a strange situation. I can understand countries playing qualifying games and also ones against a big team like Brazil, but they shouldn't be arranging friendlies during the middle of a league competition in another country.

"Moore and Vidmar will take steps to inform the coach, Frank Farina, by telephone that they would prefer to stay here

and I will also speak with him if necessary to try to persuade the Australians to allow these players to remain at the club. But if the manager says they have to come there is nothing I can do.

"But in future the players will have to make decisions as well. I have to say to them that I will be forced to take steps to find another player for their position and that it will be very difficult for them to get back into the team if they are going to be out for a long period of a month or six weeks.

"Of course, players can say they don't want to play again for their national team. But I don't think they will because they are proud to play for their country and I understand that."

Advocaat is no stranger to the dilemma faced by international managers when it comes to trying to accommodate clubs' wishes, from his time in charge of the Dutch squad.

But he insisted his outburst was not a case of poacher turning game-keeper, adding: "Now I am on the other side but I don't think the situation was as bad then. I can't remember Holland playing so many friendlies."

The Four Diegos with JOHN ALOISI

E-Mail 'The Diegos' on FourDiegos@bigpond.com



This week on Guest of the Week is one of the Socceroos' most prized striking possessions. He is an Adelaide boy who has made it in one of the world's toughest leagues - the English Premier - via the Italian Serie A. Would you please welcome Coventry City's forward John Aloisi ...

Diegos: "You commenced the season impressively for Coventry, scoring a memorable goal against Manchester United at Old Trafford but for much of the campaign you've had to live the life of an injured athlete, nursing a ruptured hamstring and watching endless re-runs of 'Neighbours'.

The injury has been a soap opera in itself. How frustrating has it been for you?"

Aloisi: "Very frustrating because the medicos weren't really sure what the problem was. Initially they thought it was the hamstring and then the knee. I had a few people telling me that I needed an operation but that didn't eventuate.

"My hamstring is still not right and I've been out for 14 weeks. So it has been very frustrating."

Diegos: "Your firebrand manager at Coventry, red-headed Scotsman, Gordon Strachan, is a demanding type. He gets so worked up that the medicos have told him that he'll have a heart attack on the sidelines if he's not careful.

"How has he coped with your unavailability - does he follow you around to the physios and doctors, hurling abuse and demanding that you get yourself right quickly?"

Aloisi: "To be honest when the team is winning he is quite happy around the

Diegos: "English footy is pretty cut throat. It seems that as soon as you got injured, along with the get-well card and flowers from the club, came the news that they had also purchased - six million pound striking sensation - Robbie Keane from Wolverhampton Wanderers.

"How do you feel about challenge of reclaiming your spot in the side and what's the strategy when you get back? Will it be the late tackle from behind at training or the Dencorub on the jock-strap ploy?"

Aloisi: "Robbie actually signed when I was still playing and we played together a couple of times. We seemed to combine pretty well so I won't try and injure him or sabotage his jock-strap. He is a brilliant player. Some of the things he has shown us so far as a 19-year-old have been very special.

"He has probably been the highlight of the season in the Premier league and in my mind he is going to be a big star in the future."

Diegos: "To your credit you were one of the first Aussies back to play in the recent two match series against Brazil. Unfortunately injury prevented you from getting on the park but you stuck around to help out where you could.

"Coming such a long way and not playing must have been a huge disappointment but having to cook, clean and iron for Frank and the boys must have been hell?"

Aloisi: "I was really looking forward to those two games from the moment they were announced so I was pretty upset that I was unable to play due to injury.



Aloisi in his beloved Australian shirt against the all-stars earlier this year. That's Javier Margas on the deck.

there ever any need to send in a peace-keeping force to maintain order in the change room?"

Aloisi: "No need to call up the peace-keeping force because we all get along pretty well. They're great blokes and we mix well socially. They are also aware that Australia is best at every sport because I remind them every time I see them."

Diegos: "Your brother Ross, presently playing for AK Graz in Austria, came out of the international wilderness when he was selected to play for the Socceroos v Manchester United this year.

"Any hopes of seeing, the Marx brothers of aussie soccer - Adelaide's very own Aloisi and Vidmar brothers strutting their stuff for the Socceroos all at the

same time?"

Aloisi: "That would be brilliant. That would make my mum really happy. Hopefully one day that will happen but that is up to Frank and my brother playing well for his club, but you never know, it could happen."

Diegos: "Thanks John. Good luck with the injury. If you're wondering, Jason Donovan does marry Kylie Minogue on Neighbours. Adios Amigo"

Aloisi: "Now you've spoiled it for me but thanks anyway Diegos. Adios Amigos."

Latest injury news ... Aloisi faces a further four weeks of rehab before he can return to play at Coventry.



Everything's peachy Keane for Aloisi at Coventry. Aloisi says he combines well upfront with the Irish star.

place and I get along with him very well but when we are losing that's when he starts having a go at you.

"He has been walking around the medical room recently saying 'it's getting cold in here there must be dead people around'. I've not come across a manager like Gordon before.

"He does get a bit excited on the touchline and at training but I guess that's just the person he is. I had Alan Ball at Portsmouth and his voice quite high too."

"It was still good to be back with the boys and meet Frank Farina for the first time as the Australian coach. I always look forward to playing for Australia. I just hope next time I won't be injured."

Diegos: "The Coventry City team has become a veritable United Nations. The squad includes a couple of flashy Moroccans, a Viking Swede goalkeeper, Brits of all persuasions and of course, an Aussie crow-eater from Adelaide.

"How does everyone get along? Is

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GREG BLAKE
C7 SOCCER COMMENTATOR
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Headlines which made me smile in the past few days. 'Farina won't dissuade Zelic from retiring.'

Once again the new national coach shows he has the nads for the job by lobbing the ball back into the court of one of this country's best talents, but unfortunately also one of our biggest prima donnas.

'Olyroo coach omits Kewell'.

Thus averting another public tug-of-war with pathetic and petty Leeds United.

tenacity, he's intense and he plays with a desperation that flies through a side.

"Robbie Stanton, Alvin Ceccoli, Matty Horsley; all of them have the ability to be like David, but when you've actually got someone like David in your side they seem to lift more as well.

"David has been a very good buy for us - I've been very lucky."

Of course Cervinski was taught by the best, Andrew Marth, whom he played alongside for most of his career at Melbourne Knights and Carlton.

I was interested to note that the currently red-hot Newcastle Breakers boast one of the lowest average ages of any squad currently in the NSL competition.

I believe the Breakers - Andy Harper included - weigh in at an average of slightly more than 22 years of age, making their recent achievements even more impressive.

It does lend further credibility to the theory that if you can get an inexperienced team up and pumped and running on adrenaline that the virtue of youth is such that they know no boundaries - as yet.

It'll be interesting to see how Lee Sterrey's team responds if, or more likely when, they cop a flogging or two during the season.

The bounce-back factor is usually the best indicator of any team's real ability.

Humility, as they say in footy, is usually about one week away.

So much for Brisbane's club-record nine game undefeated streak to start the season, the gloss of that effort long since eroded as the Strikers have lost three in succession for the first time ever under coach John Kosmina.

Personally, I'm not off the bandwagon yet, with the Strikers (right) having shown enough in some of the those early season games to suggest they are play-off material.

But the losses appear to be taking a toll all the same.

No finger-pointing and I've no interest in validating the comment from the drop-kick from Brisbane by naming them, except to merely mention their response to a phone call about the loss of form with "piss off".

Thanks for that.

Just another blot on the record of a mob which has managed more than its fair share of public and not-so-public PR bloopers of recent times.

I wonder if there is someone sagely



Another red card this season. This one's Goran Lozanovski against Carlton in 'The Battle of Melbourne'.

and influential enough to institute a maturity program up there

Again, I think it important to remind everyone who (sensibly) reads this column regularly that I am not in any way prepared to wear the unwarranted tag of being a 'ref basher'.

What I am trying to do is draw attention to the insidious disease which is currently eroding the mutual confidence and respect between the players and coaches and the NSL match officials.

This column not included, I counted 27 cases of very public complaint, implied criticism or outright damnation of NSL ref-

coaches and players are either incapable of rational editorial on such matters or are immediately wrong in matters of the interpretation of the laws of the game.

It matters not the name of one particular referee who recently copped a heap of flak from several quarters, because I'm not trying to humiliate any one individual.

But my point is that this bloke was seriously taken to task by the likes of Bernd Stange, Zoran Matic and Lee Sterrey in consecutive weeks and not on marginal calls on individual decisions either, but on his overall competency in his job.

Now those three coaches are no mugs and I'm sure there's no personal agendas, thus if a trio of such illustrious footy names are saying the same thing their opinions ought at least be considered.

Thus we follow up with the telling figure of another eight send-offs in round 12 - bringing the total to an outrageous 43 for the season to date - and a new outright leader in the race to find the league's ultimate 'Hanging Judge.' Matthew Brezze bagged a couple of red-carders in round 12, to give him a league best seven victims so far in 1999/2000.

I probably don't mix in the right social circles often enough, but jeeze you meet some bizarre supporters at times.

How about the mob that tend to bend my ear after South Melbourne home games at Bob Jane Stadium, they seriously keep stats - on a weekly basis - of the number of Steve Panopoulos' back-passes.

And they're serious about it. Go figure!



ereeing standards in the national daily media over the course of a mere five days last week

The publicity is doing the game no end of harm, thus it's not even a matter of who is right or wrong any more, just for pity's sake address and hopefully resolve the issues ASAP.

And I'm not talking about the league's shallow quick-fix, where speaking out draws fines or at threats of fines.

The whole principle of that is offensive anyway, the broad ruling implying that



The old 'Shovel' David Cervinski.

The old 'Shovel', David Cervinski, continues to give some of the best value-for-money service of any player going around in the domestic competition.

Sure, he's a good player, a terrific leader to have around any club and boasts the experience of a three-time grand final player, but he is also one of the toughest blokes in the clinches.

He was at his inspirational kamikaze-style best as his Wollongong City team defended against a desperate South Melbourne at hostile Bob Jane Stadium last Thursday night.

He splits packs and knows no fear when his body is on the line, and Cervinski's valuable contribution to his third NSL club, has not gone unnoticed by his newest coach, Nick Theodorakopoulos.

"I totally agree that David Cervinski, for us, has added another dimension," says Nick T. of his first-year player.

"More importantly, he shows that

	(Overall)								(Home)					(Away)				
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
Sydney Olympic	12	8	2	2	21	9	26	12	3	2	1	10	6	5	0	1	11	3
Carlton	12	7	3	2	26	13	24	13	4	1	1	14	7	3	2	1	12	6
Wollongong Wolves	13	6	4	3	24	18	22	6	4	0	2	11	7	2	4	1	13	11
Perth Glory	12	6	3	3	26	16	21	10	3	2	1	17	9	3	1	2	9	7
Brisbane Strikers	12	6	3	3	18	12	21	6	3	2	1	13	7	3	1	2	5	5
Marconi Stallions	12	6	2	4	16	17	20	-1	3	0	2	4	7	3	2	2	12	10
Newcastle Breakers	12	5	4	3	18	17	19	1	2	3	1	11	10	3	1	2	7	7
Football Kingz	12	4	4	4	22	23	16	-1	1	3	2	10	14	3	1	2	12	9
South Melbourne	13	4	3	6	20	21	15	-1	4	2	1	16	7	0	1	5	4	14
Parramatta Power	12	4	3	5	19	20	15	-1	2	3	2	10	9	2	0	3	9	11
Gippsland Falcons	12	3	4	5	8	13	13	-5	2	1	3	4	5	1	3	2	4	8
Melbourne Knights	12	4	1	7	14	23	13	-9	3	0	3	6	6	1	1	4	8	17
Northern Spirit	12	4	1	7	9	18	13	-9	2	0	3	4	8	2	1	4	5	10
Canberra Cosmos	12	3	2	7	15	22	11	-7	2	1	4	9	8	1	1	3	6	14
Adelaide Force	12	2	4	6	11	16	10	-5	1	2	2	6	7	1	2	4	5	9
Sydney United	12	2	3	7	8	17	9	-9	2	1	4	5	8	0	2	3	3	9

Produced with the assistance of McRopod Concept Sports Systems - www.planet.net.au/~mcropod. Note South and Wolves have played an extra game.

NSL TOP SCORERS:

(going into tonight's round)

PAUL FOSTER

(Strikers) 9 goals

ALEX MOREIRA

(Carlton) 9 goals

MICHAEL CURCIJA (SM) 8

JOHN BOUNAVOGLIA (NB) 7

SASHO PETROVSKI 7

JOEL GRIFFITHS (PP) 6

CON BOUTSIANIS (PG) 6

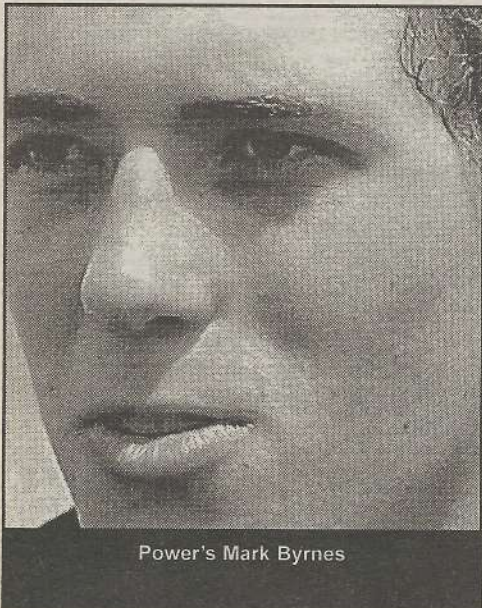


SEX AND POWER!



Parra Power v Sydney Olympic

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Parramatta Stadium in Sydney



Power's Mark Byrnes

By Aidan Ormond

Has the NSL seen the return of 'sexy football' as evidenced by Sydney Olympic's smooth and free flowing style of the last month?

The Olympic fans seemingly think so after raucous approval of their side - playing with three forwards - in the 2-0 victory over Strikers last round.

And it's no coincidence that the last time we saw such a wonderfully oiled footballing machine was back in the halcyon days of Sydney United circa 1996/97; a side coached by none other than Branko Culina.

Sydney Olympic's coach is the very same man, however Culina is not so sure of the tag, 'sexy football', "after all look what happened to Ruud Gullit!" he reasoned, but the side is showing all the hallmarks of a 'Culina-side'.

The coach and his squad are buzzing. They are on top of the table, playing great football and the club has lifted as a result. Yet the Power will provide them with a stern test if Olympic is to be the first club to lead the NSL in the new millennium.

"Yes, this will be a very tough game because of the quality of players that Power has - Vrkic, Ardone, Bennett, Barrett and Sterjovski, to name just a few.

"This game will test us and our depth because we have players like Mendez, Thomas and Tsekenis out for this one.

"Can we win? Well we will go there to protect what we have, but once you get to the top of the table, every game is difficult.

"Everyone wants to knock you off, which of course makes it hard. I always want to play good football - it's like a training session without shooting - everyone wants to play good football.

"The players love to have the ball and they want to play open attacking soccer, which is my philosophy.

"Everyone wants to be a lover not a fighter, but having said that, it may not be possible for us to do that tonight. To be a good team you have to be able to do both, that is scrap when needed and play the sort of football that we all love to see and play.

"I must say though, being on top of the league is a bloody good feeling! The big test however is, are we good enough

to stay there?

"We certainly would like to be the first Australian club to be leading the NSL in the new millennium, that is why tonight's game is so important for us."

One of the most intriguing duels will be the outrageously talented Joey Mark Byrnes in the Power defence, and the man many say is Australia's finest striker, Pablo Cardozo.

Guile versus youth. Skill on skill, this will be worth seeing. After last week's full NSL debut by Byrnes - who had his trampled by an over-eager Ray Younis - the youngster will appreciate playing against a side that values its footballing ethos.

In the midfield there will be a battle royale with the feisty Olympic player Marcus Phillips taking on Bennett and Ardone - expect sparks to fly, while the Olyroos Emerton and Power's Jacob Burns should also add an extra dimension to this encounter with their ability to run at defences out wide.

They both have been named in the upcoming four-nation Olyroo tournament in Adelaide.

Mendez however is a huge loss. He is in supreme form this year. Ironically last year at this time he was making his debut for Spirit, helping them to a 1-0 home win over Falcons. Injury restricted his appearances then, but this year it has been full steam ahead. He still is good enough to play for the Socceroos.

It's also noticeable how many ex-Olympic players there are in the Power line-up - David Barrett, Walter Ardone, Milan Blagojevic and of course David Mitchell, who all would have played at tonight's opponents at roughly the same time. They will no doubt be keen to make a point against the visiting fans.

With so many quality strikers on show - Cardozo, the back in form Arambasic and Sterjovski and Griffiths for the home side, I am tipping a holiday goalfest, and certainly one worth seeing.

Defensively though is where Power is weakest, a surprise really given the quality of defenders at the club, but as Power assistant coach Lawrie McKinna pointed out, the side is still just a few wins out of the six without having played that well so far in their inaugural season.

"Looking at last week's performance at Sydney United we competed all the way, and hopefully that is a turning point for us. This will be a very difficult side because they have guys at the back who are very tough, but of course players upfront who can score.

"It seems that we play better against teams higher up than us so I expect a good performance in front of our fans tonight," said McKinna.

In team news, Milan Blagojevic is suspended, talented youngster Ahmed Elrich is expected to play in his place. There will be the usual pre-match entertainment (the band that played during the game last time will not performing) and the club is expecting a crowd of 6-8,000 depending on the weather.

*Interestingly, during the week Olympic coach Branko Culina was quoted as saying he was considering quitting



Pablo Cardozo: the striker to watch for Olympic but Chee Chee Mendez (inset) is missing.

football altogether at the end of this season. The report in a Sydney daily said it was a surprise, however it was no surprise

to Inside Soccer readers, who read this front page story on November 2!

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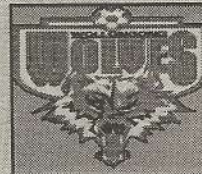
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Beware the Wolf!

Brisbane Strikers v Wollongong Wolves

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane



Saso Petrovski: last week he was Saso Claus, will he bring more gifts for Wolves tonight at Suncorp? Petrovski is seen here with David Clarkson during last Thursday night's 1-1 draw in Melbourne.

By Ben Cubby

Wollongong City Wolves' visit to Suncorp Stadium this Tuesday presents Brisbane with the chance to strike back after a recent run of poor results that has seen them slip from first on the ladder.

After leading the table for the first eleven rounds, consecutive losses to Newcastle, Gippsland and Sydney Olympic see the Strikers sitting precariously in fifth spot, and a loss to the Wolves here could see them slip out of the six altogether.

Wollongong could suffer the same fate, though, as Marconi and Newcastle edge closer to the top of the table.

With a third of the season gone, the race for a finals position is gradually beginning to take shape.

Only Olympic, Carlton and Perth can consider themselves likely candidates at this stage.

Historically, Brisbane have had the edge over the Wolves, winning 10 of the 17 encounters.

Recent form favours Wollongong, but, on this occasion, the amount of Christmas pudding con-

sumed by players is more likely to be a deciding factor.

Brisbane boss John Kosmina has suggested that hard work and a touch of "desperation" can pull the team out of their form slump, and he will be looking to the older hands like Gwynne, Meredith, Dwyer and McClaren to rally the younger

troops.

Losing, like winning, is a hard habit to break, but if Brisbane can pin down the free-flowing Wolves and play to their own strengths then they will be back in business.

These strengths include the re-born attacking instincts of Paul Foster. Although he has-

n't been on target in the last couple of games, the former Spirit player has nabbed nine so far - as many as the rest of the team put together.

David Pilic is another of Kosmina's largely unheralded off-season signings who has shown good touch in front of goal.

The ex-Rochdale Rovers 21-year-old scored a bag full at state league level last season.

Additionally, former Joey Wade Baldwin and Shane Smeltz - who scored a cracking goal against the Solomon Islands in a friendly last week - give their coach a number of options upfront.

The defensive partnership of Glenn Gwynne and Matt Bell has been a key factor in the Strikers' success this year.

Along with the ever-cool Clint Bolton, the pair have kept Brisbane's goals-against tally down to a measly twelve, second only to leaders Olympic.

One player this duo will have to look out for is in-form Wollongong forward Saso Petrovski.

His double strike against Canberra last week won him man-of-the-match honours and confirmed that he is starting to fulfill the promise he first showed at Bankstown City in the NSW Super League.

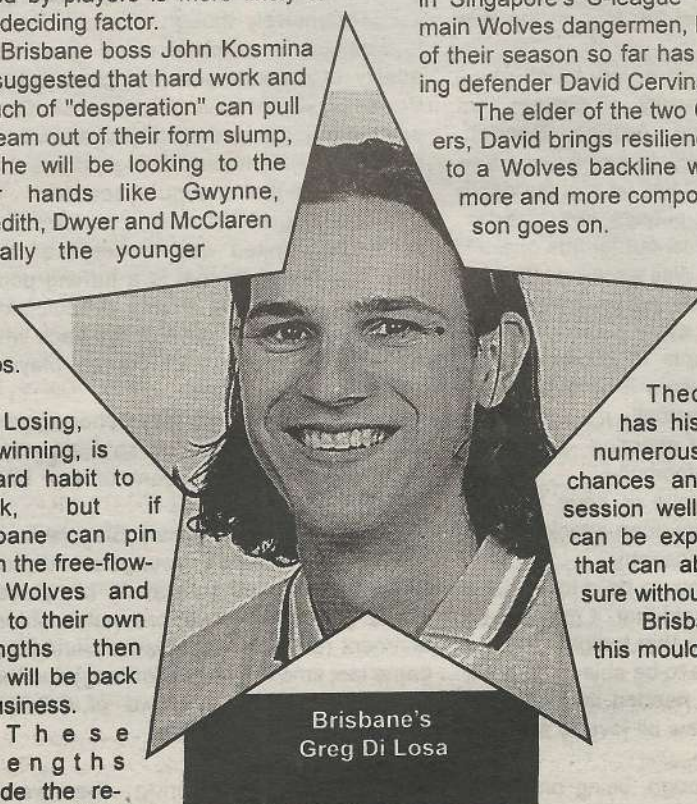
Wolves midfielders Paul Reid and Anthony Surjan have been playing alongside one another for a while now, and they bring a good mixture of flair and tenacity to the heart of the team.

Fit-again Socceroo Alvin Ceccoli has settled back into the lie-up, adding a touch of class to both defence and attack.

Scott Chipperfield and import Stuart Young - who know each other prior to joining Wolves from their time in Singapore's S-league - are the other main Wolves dangermen, but the real star of their season so far has been ball-playing defender David Cervinski.

The elder of the two Cervinski brothers, David brings resilience and strength to a Wolves backline which is looking more and more composed as the season goes on.

Wolves coach
N i c k



Brisbane's
Greg Di Losa

Theodorakopoulos has his team creating numerous goal-scoring chances and holding possession well, although they can be exposed by teams that can absorb the pressure without cracking.

Brisbane may well fit this mould.

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South's final game before Brazil



SYDNEY UNITED V SOUTH MELBOURNE

Preview of today's NSL game at Edensor Park in Sydney



Sydney United's new Olyroo defender Eddy Bosnar (red shirt) will be looking to show Con Blatsis that he is good enough to play at the heart of the national U/23 defence.



South defender Nick Orlic. Will have the aerial threat of Mario Jermen plus the deep runs of Tommy Pondeljak to contend with today.

By John Vrtaric

South Melbourne play its last game in the National Soccer League (NSL) before their much-anticipated departure for Brazil and the World Club Championships. The champions' performance this year seems to suggest that they have had their minds on South America rather than the NSL for most of the season.

Playing against the bottom-placed Sydney United gives them the opportunity to depart the shores with a confidence-boosting win, but it will by no means be any easy task.

United's position belies their performance over the last month of the 1999-2000 season.

Though without a win in their last five games (two draws and three losses) they have been unlucky.

Five weeks ago a meritorious 0-0 draw against the then runaway leaders Brisbane Strikers was worthy of much more. A perennial problem of putting away the goal scoring chances was what stood between an honourable draw and a good win.

The following games yielded similarly unlucky performances against Parramatta Power, in a 1-1 away draw, Perth Glory, in a 0-1 home loss, and again against Power in a 1-2 home loss.

Sandwiched in between was a 3-1 away loss to Carlton that rounded off a month that has reaped little reward for the team from Sydney's western suburbs.

Constant speculation on the club's future in next year's 12 team NSL first division has not helped the team or its coach David Ratcliffe.

Ratcliffe had the dubious honour of, what has now become an annual tradition for United, rebuilding the team from scratch after the well documented mass walkout of last year's minor premiership winning team.

He has put together a useful team but one that has trouble scoring goals. The team has only scored eight goals in twelve games, the equal lowest in the league. On the other hand, led by the stalwart Velimir Kupresak, the defence has conceded only 17 goals which is equal seventh lowest after twelve rounds.

Ratcliffe has built his defence around Kupresak and has been fortunate enough to gain the services of Young Soccerroo Eddy Bosnar, and the unheralded Vince Savocca, to play alongside the club appearance record holder.

Young Nahuel Arrarte has been a revelation in United's midfield and with the help of experienced Aytec Genc has provided numerous chances for his strikers, most to no avail.

Another gain, from Melbourne sister club, Melbourne Knights, Tom Pondeljak has enjoyed playing with Arrarte and Genc. The speed and direct attacking style of Pondeljak is perfectly supported by the skill, guile and creativity of his two midfield partners.

Ratcliffe has tried a number of different combinations up front with Nick

Bosevski, Mario Jermen, and Matthew Zec being his main options.

Ray Younis and Pondeljak have been tried up front as well when the main strikers have been hit by injury.

South Melbourne, on the other hand, have had a topsy-turvy season, having to focus on the World Club Championship qualifiers took away some of the focus from the NSL and the subsequent anticipation of playing the likes of Manchester United and Vasco da Gama must have disrupted the mental state of the team.

Add to that fact that the team has won the championship for the last two years and how difficult it must be to 'three-peat', it is obvious that coach Ange Postecoglou would have had difficulty in focusing the team on the NSL.

Postecoglou started the year with basically the same squad as last year, goalkeeper Michael Petkovic being the only absentee, with only a couple of newcomers, one of whom, Ritchie Alagich, has

been injured nearly all year.

With only a minimal change from last year a sense of familiarity, added to the constant talk of the club championship, has made it very difficult to psyche the players for the week in-week out grind of NSL football.

South Melbourne's last five games have produced almost as little as United's - only one win has resulted and that was rather fortunate. The home win against Parramatta Power was only achieved after the visitors had a player sent off.

In between South Melbourne has had one draw, against lowly Canberra Cosmos, and three losses.

The saving grace for the champions has been its home record - they've won four of their six games at home with the only defeat at the hands local rivals Carlton in the last round.

On the other hand they are winless away from home whilst United's only two wins have both been at home.

The key to the game will be the ability of the United strikers to put away the chances created by the Genc, Arrarte and the will of the wisps, Pondeljak.

With South Melbourne due to fly off to Brazil in the next couple of days it will be difficult for the players to focus on this game - some of them may be more concerned with averting injury.

• With the lack of focus on the part of South Melbourne and the desperate nature of Sydney United, an upset is on the cards.

SITTER!

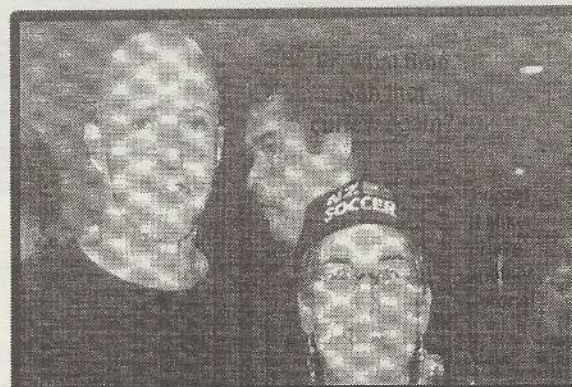
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Victoria's struggle street derby

Melbourne Knights v Gippsland Falcons

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Somers Street in Melbourne



Knights coach Vlado 'The Moose' Vanis

By John Vrtaric

The battle of Victorian rivals Gippsland Falcons and Melbourne Knights takes on extra meaning with the impending rationalisation of the National Soccer League (NSL) for the 2000/2001 season. Both teams are being touted as potential dropout candidates as the league seeks to decrease its size by four down to twelve teams.

The teams have the same number of points and are separated by goal differ-

ence only, with the Falcons sitting in eleventh position and the Knights one spot below them.

As a regional team within a very small population base the Falcons have experienced financial difficulties over the years, but seem to be consolidating financially with the region getting behind them, although the results on the field could be better to help increase the size of the home support.

With the departure of coach Stuart Munro to big spending Carlton, Jeff Hopkins took over the role at the beginning of the season with a limited budget. He was fortunate to acquire the services of the former Sydney Olympic and Australian international Mehmed Durakovic as the lynchpin of his defensive strategy.

And it is the defence that is the pivotal point of Hopkins' strategy - the team ranks equal third in goals conceded with only leaders Sydney Olympic and early season pacesetters Brisbane Strikers having conceded less goals.

But on the other side of the coin, the team, despite the recruitment Victorian State League strikers Peter Kakos and Juan Nilo - both strikers were prolific goalscorers in the State League - have scored the least amount of goals, along with bottom placed Sydney United.

Along with a struggling forward line the Falcons have an inexperienced and young midfield that has failed to dominate games and provide the sort of service that the strikers require.

Andy Vargas, Robbie Puca and Will Hastie comprise a skillful and creative group of linkmen but without an old head to take

It also has a good home record having won two of its six games and scoring four goals against five conceded.

The Knights started the season in the worst possible way - they lost the first four games and five of the first six. A more disastrous start you could not image.

With such a start there had to be a casualty and the Knights were the first, and thus far, only team to sack their coach. Josip Biskic took the long walk a few weeks ago to be replaced by another former Knights player Vlado Vanis.

As is often the case, a change of coach does galvanises a team's performance, in the short term at least, and the Knights followed up a 6-1 away hammering at the hands of Perth Glory with two successive wins.

The first of those wins was against the current leaders Sydney Olympic, whom they beat 2-1 at home, and then followed that up with an equally impressive 1-2 away win over third placed Wollongong Wolves.

An unlucky 0-1 home defeat at the hands of Northern Spirit brought the run to a halt but a subsequent 3-3

away draw with the Football Kingz would have restored confidence to Vanis' team.

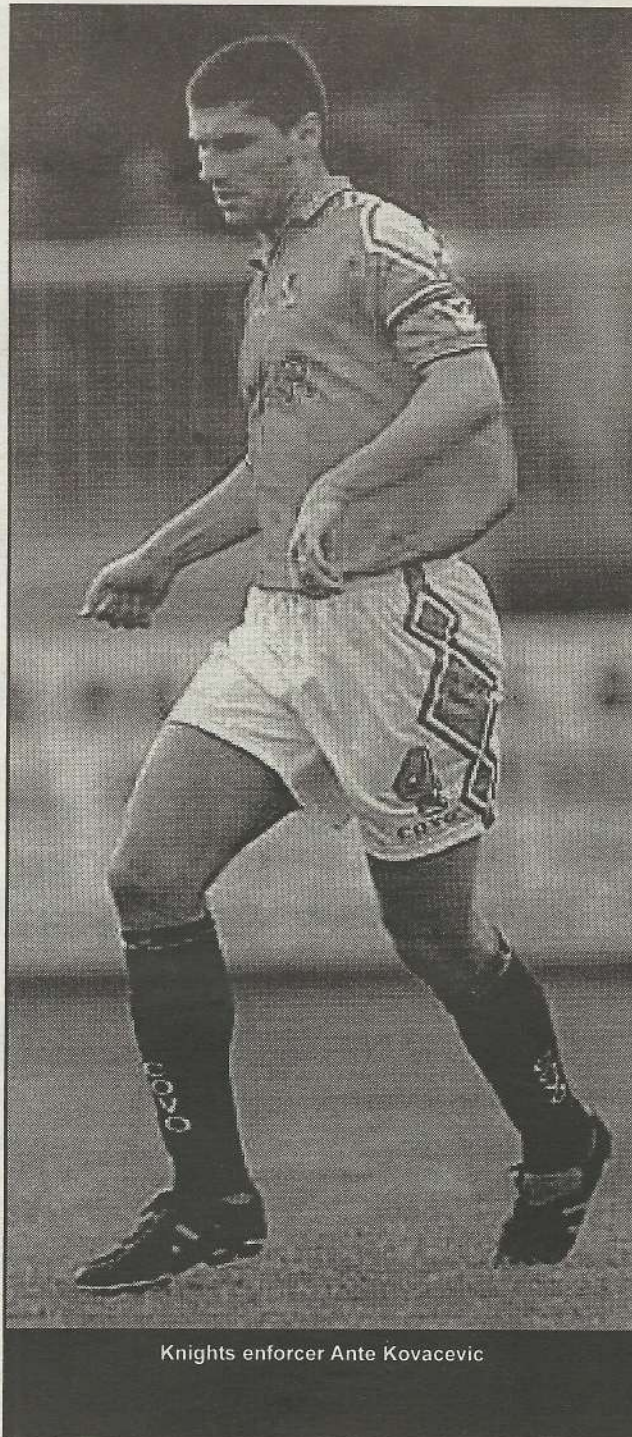
A basically young team sup-

control - of the situation. That could change when the Scottish professional Sandy Robertson makes his comeback from injury.

The Falcons are in reasonable current form having won two of its last five games - including amongst those wins is the 0-1 away defeat of previous leaders Brisbane Strikers.

and Adrian Cervinski, the Knights are going to find it difficult to move up the ladder with a squad that lacks depth.

Kelic seems to be regaining some of his old goal scoring prowess that has netted him over one hundred goals in his NSL



Knights enforcer Ante Kovacevic

career. His two goal effort against the Kingz last week may be a portent of better times ahead.

Kelic's partnership with Cervinski is crucial to the Knights in the matches ahead and in particular against today's opponent.

Gippsland will put up a strong defensive unit led by Durakovic and aided by the wily Manny Gotis and the Falcons' recruit from the Victorian State League Dean Fak.

It is this battle, between the veteran defensive formation of the Falcons and the equally experienced Knights' twin strikers, that will decide the outcome of today's game.

Kelic and Cervinski must find a way through one of the meanest defences in the league to provide the Knights with the goals they are seeking.

The most likely outcome, though, is a stalemate - Durakovic and his cohorts are unlikely to wilt under the pressure from the Knights while the Falcons forward line will be up against an equally difficult Knights defence led by Ante Kovacevic.

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Falcons' regular scorer Brian MacNicol

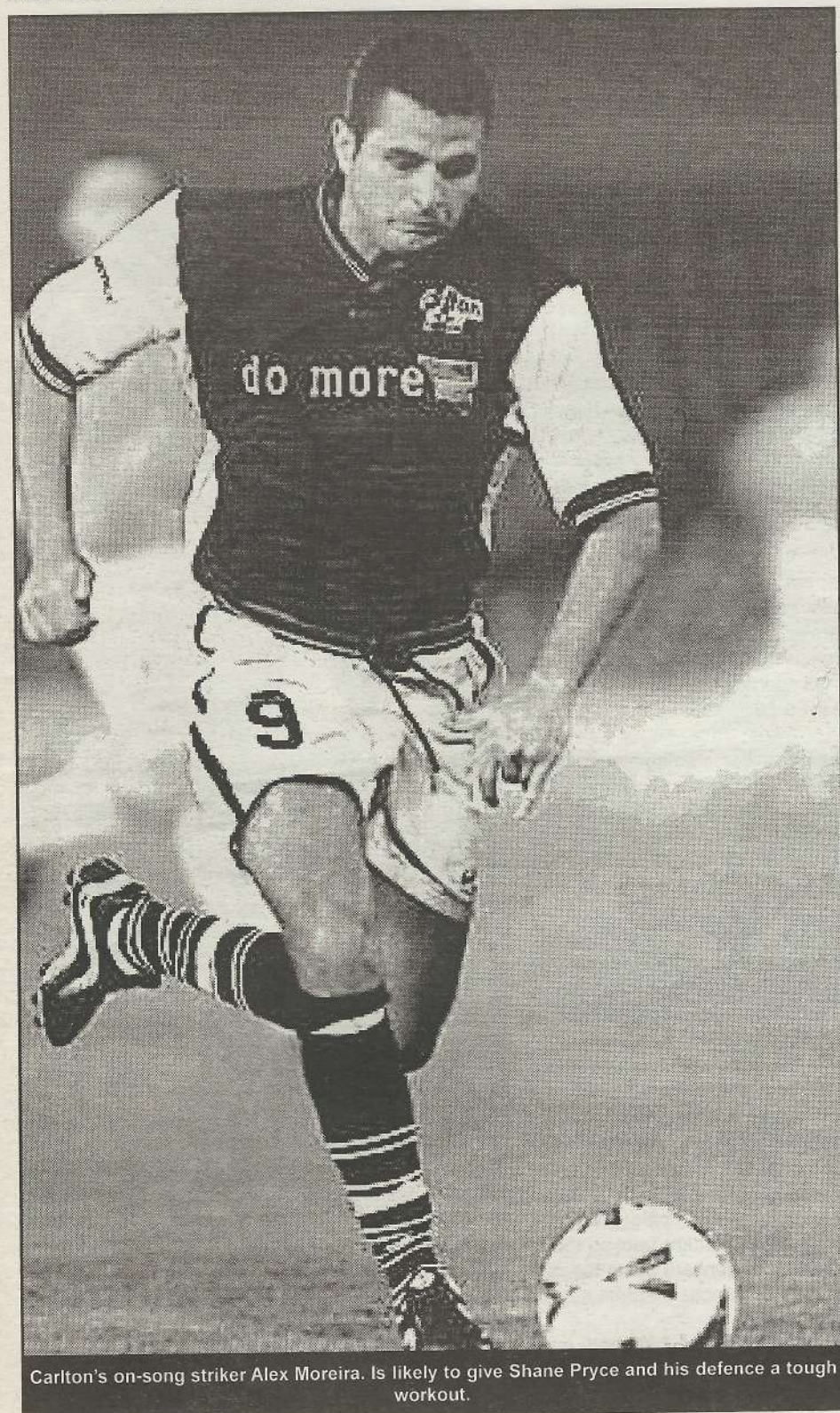
plemented by a few older hard heads, in particular the twin strikers, Ivan Kelic

Can the Breakers make it five wins in a row?



Carlton v Newcastle Breakers

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Olympic Park in Melbourne.



Carlton's on-song striker Alex Moreira. Is likely to give Shane Pryce and his defence a tough workout.

By Mark Fisher

Tuesday night at Olympic Park, Melbourne - the scene of an intriguing clash between two genuine finals prospects. Second-placed Carlton are the hosts, and the visitors shouldn't be expecting too much southern hospitality from them.

Fresh from their inspirational last-gasp victory over arch-rivals South Melbourne, a game in which the Blues dominated in possession terms, the professional Carlton outfit will be looking to grab top spot with a win over the often tough Novocastrians, providing Sydney Olympic slip up against Parramatta at the Powerhouse.

Riding high on the crest of their own recent success, the Newcastle Breakers are worthy challengers to the Blues. The whole Hunter region have themselves a team to be proud of, and providing they can keep knocking off big-name clubs like

Perth and Brisbane, they may well deliver on their potential by the business end of this NSL season.

Both clubs are exponents of attractive football, both boast real triers all over the park. Admittedly, Carlton has the edge in attack, with a strike force to set the pulse racing.

Moreira, Thompson, Markovski, Marth, Slater, Terminello, Packer - it's a lineup most other clubs could only dream of.

The Carlton defence completes what looks like a cohesive, determined unit. Dave McPherson was rock-solid last week against the current league champs, but his second half send-off means

that another 'tall' in Craig Deans will probably slot straight into his position.

Sean "Roly" Douglas will likely occupy a central defensive spot, and Mark Atkinson, formerly used in midfield, will probably again complement the back three.

Arrayed against them is a mainly young and enthusiastic Newcastle, bolstered by the wiles and experience of part-time media personality Andy Harper.

Brad Wieczorek is a classy provider and John Buonavoglia stars up forward, whereas the backline is particularly impressive, with Bobby Catlin aided by dynamo Andy Roberts, Travis Dodd, Glen Owens and midfielder-cum-defender Glenn Sprod keeping things nice and tight.

Newcastle coach Lee Sterrey may go for a 4-4-2 formation, and if so could well aim to rely on a largely counter-attacking game plan.

One clear sign of a good team is its bench strength. Carlton will likely have unlucky forward Mike Conroy and defender Con Anthopoulos in reserve, and possibly sensational wingback Andrew Packer if he doesn't start the match for the Blues.

The odds are with Carlton to win at home. Carlton have a 2-1 head-to-head record against Newcastle, and these sides have also played out a single draw during their short confrontational history.

Having said that, the feeling this season is that the Breakers will be out to lose their 'underachievers' tag for good.

The self-confidence the Breakers are presently enjoying can be best summed up by comments from the coach, who last weekend suggested that his side will "fight for everything ... tooth and nail. We have some spirit in the club which is all important."

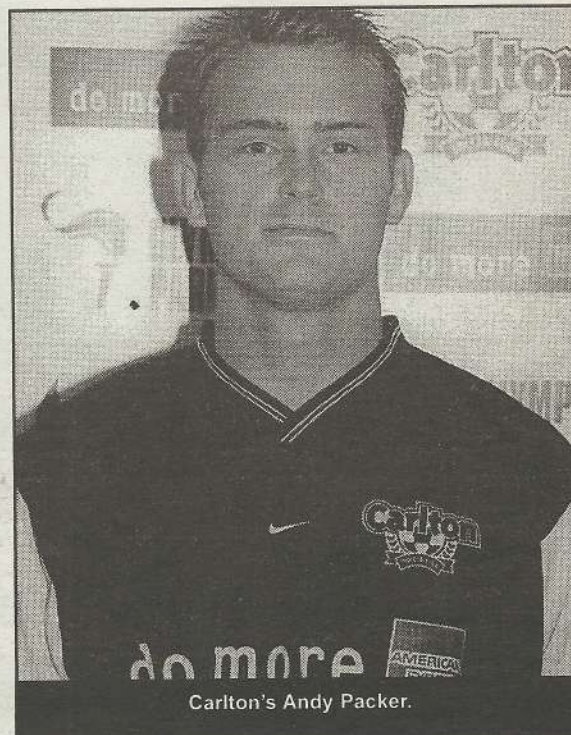
Indeed, if Newcastle grab all three points on offer at Olympic Park, they will give their diehard followers the Rowdies cause to kick off their own millennium celebrations a few days early.

The weather for the game should be pleasant and warm. And just in case



Breakers pocket rocket John Buonavoglia.

you like your football served up with a big dose of flavour and atmosphere, events beyond the periphery of the playing surface are sure to please. The behind-the-



Carlton's Andy Packer.

goal beer garden and barbecue will be in action again, as will the True Blue Army as they sing up a storm in the Eastern Stand.

The fixture deserves a much better attendance than the average 2,500 that make up Carlton's core support. It should be a thoroughly entertaining night at Olympic Park, where a result is pretty much a certainty.

SU43 - Brazil or not Brazil? Who really cares anymore?

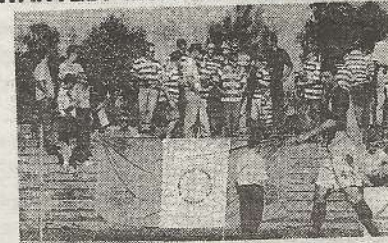


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Wynton Rufer's birthday wish: three points and a hangover?

Adelaide City Force v Football Kingz

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Hindmarsh Stadium in Adelaide



All the way with FDJ? Fred de Jong will be hoping to score at Hindmarsh tonight (sorry!)

By Grant Stantiall
from Sitter! Fanzine

Christmas came early for some of the Kingz players this year. The 23rd December was a date heavily pencilled in on the calendars of our Australian contingent as they winged their way back home for a few days R & R (or in Levent Osman's case - "some seriously hard partying" with the Gippy crew) while the local lads headed off to various locations within New Zealand to get home for Christmas with their families.

With the club positioned comfortably in mid-table, a few days off were just reward for the effort put in so far (bearing in mind the problems with some late player payments also).

The Kingz did hold a training session in the late afternoon on Boxing Day, minus the Australian players, prior to flying out early Monday morning.

The general feeling here is that the Kingz side have earned their small break.

The results on the road (air?) have been quite exceptional, while the home

performances are in obvious need of a bit of tweaking and polishing.

Player-coach Wynton Rufer still insists there are a few players that need to take on a more professional attitude.

This game provides the opportunity for them to prove Rufer wrong. Robbie Middleby is one player of whom a lot is expected and after an initial spurt in the first few games his form tailed off. It is now time for players like him to start imposing their presence in games.

On current form, the Kingz are looking an outside bet for a top six place and this is really quite a bonus, rather than a realistic aim. For Fred de Jong it could be his swansong season and he won't be happy with anything less than a good finish.

With all the off-field problems dogging the Kingz, it has been good to hear from inside the camp that the team morale is on a high.

However, that aside, it will be all hands on deck come the 28th December, with players seemingly making their way from all points to Hindmarsh Stadium for Round 13 of the NSL.

This match is in fact scene two of a four part play; the result of a bizarre draw that sees the Kingz take on both Adelaide City Force and Wollongong Wolves four times this season.

And we thought this type of thing only happened in Scotland!

The Kingz won their first away encounter with the Force 3-2, although Adelaide were minus suspended players Alex Tobin and Aurelio Vidmar.

This round Adelaide are likely to field a full-strength side whilst the Kingz will miss the tenacity and experience of former Adelaide striker Dino Menillo, suspended following a red-card against Melbourne Knights in the previous round.

It looks a tough ask for a repeat of the first ever encounter between both clubs but with Rufer missing from the home game against Canberra on 3rd January, it is important that the Kingz take at least a point from Adelaide game.

Chris Jackson is likely to return to the starting lineup after serving a one-match suspension having previously picked up four yellow cards. Keeper Michael Utting is still recovering from an injury sustained during that 3-2 victory.

Goalkeeping sensation Marcus Stergiopoulos (Adelaide fans will be familiar with Sterg's skills between the sticks) will make way for Jason Batty.

Stergiopoulos has come into a rich vein of form and should be a key player for the Kingz as they look to exploit any weaknesses in the Force defence.

Playing in his usual position of wing-back has paid dividends for the side in recent weeks - those surging runs forward being the catalyst for a number of goals scored by the Kingz.

The defence has had more leaks than my grandmother's colostomy bag and this will be a continuing worry for the Rufer brothers, as they look to stop the flood of goals conceded.

With Damian Mori currently on fire and fast approaching the NSL goalscoring record, there will have to be a concerted effort at the back. Wynton Rufer is wary of Aurelio Vidmar as well.

The Australian international is well respected by the Kingz player coach. "He is a quality player" Rufer says.

New Zealand internationals Che Bunce and Ivan Vicelich will need to be at the top of their game at the heart of the Kingz defence - while the probable mid-field line-up of Robbie Middleby, Harry Ngata, Chris Jackson and Levent Osman - will be expected to provide quality ball to the head and feet of Wynton Rufer, Fred de Jong or Aaron Silva.

Chilean striker Silva has earned inclusion back into the squad after being on the outer since November 13, finding it difficult to adapt at this level.

He is included in a squad of 16 that



Praying that big Fred de Jong misses a hatful? Force defender Matthew Kemp.

will travel to Adelaide. Only 14 players can be named for the match, this being one of the NSL rules that has amused fans this side of the Tasman. We are used to the naming of a starting eleven with five named substitutes.

Rufer, who turns 37 the day after the match, will be targeted by Adelaide for certain. He still displays an outstanding first touch and shows great vision. In recent weeks Rufer has been instrumental in the Kingz attack, and plenty will be expected from the Oceania Player of the Century.

He will be looking for that extra birthday present you can be sure.

The biggest hassle for the Kingz going into tonight's fixture is the travel arrangements for the game, with flights to Adelaide having to go via Sydney and a huge amount of time spent waiting around the airport.

I'm picking a 2-2 draw.

Kingz happeningz:

Fabio Macolino and Brazilian player Maciel Edmilson have been released by the club. Macolino returned to Australia the day after the Kingz drew with Gippsland.

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Top six battle of the big guns



PERTH GLORY V MARCONI STALLIONS

Preview of today's NSL game at Perth Oval in Perth



Bound for Glory? (L to R) Messrs Halpin Valle, Despotovski and Thorp. Today's game is vital for both sides' top six aspirations.

By John Vrtaric

In what is probably the match of Round 13 Perth Glory takes on the Marconi Stallions with every intention to retain their thus far unbeaten run against the Sydney side. In its short history Glory has played eight matches against the Stallions with four of those being victories and the other four draws.

Although the Stallions have not been able to beat Perth as yet, ironically they haven't yet lost in Perth, either.

Most of the games, though, have produced exciting and incident packed

games and this one, no doubt, will be one for the fans to savour.

The last meeting between the two was played in the second round of the season and produced a thrilling 3-3 draw.

This was Glory's first home game of the season and introduced the young Ivan Ergic to the large and boisterous 16,176 Perth crowd.

Both teams had an ordinary start to the season but have pulled themselves up into the top six primarily as a result of four straight victories.

With two draws and a loss in the first

three games Marconi turned their season around by winning the next four games with victories over Sydney United, South Melbourne, Newcastle Breakers and Northern Spirit, two wins at home and two away.

Glory had a better start to the season with two wins and a draw in their first three games but went through a slump in the next four games with two consecutive draws followed by two losses.

Glory's resurgence occurred between rounds eight and eleven - beginning with two convincing home wins including a 6-1 walloping of Melbourne Knights.

They continued their impressive form with a narrow 0-1 away victory over Sydney United and concluded with another excellent 3-1 defeat of current title-holders South Melbourne.

Perth's run was halted in their last game when they were somewhat unluckily beaten 3-2 by the form team of the moment, Newcastle Breakers.

Nevertheless, Glory is currently one of the hot teams of the last month and go into this game having won four of their last five games (along with Sydney Olympic) - second only to the Breakers who have won four and drew one of their last five games.

Marconi, on the other hand, are not in a similar form having lost three and won

only two of their last five games.

Prior to the 0-2 away defeat of Gippsland Falcons in the last round Marconi had suffered two losses in a row, including a comprehensive 0-3 home thrashing at the hands of the Football Kingz.

The two teams have been handicapped by defensive deficiencies this season - Marconi due mainly to the injuries, and occasional suspension, of its 'twin tower' defensive partners, Mark Babic and Dominic Longo, while Perth has failed to replenish its stock after the off-season loss of four central defenders, including Craig Deans and Danny Hay.

Marconi is also having problems scoring goals this year - an off-season injury to Francis Awaritefe hasn't helped their cause.

Early season recruit Harry Karl has not yet had

few weeks but earned himself the wrath of coach Bernd Stange for the defensive error deep into injury of the first half in the game against Newcastle last week.

Naven's failure to clear the ball gave Andy Harper the opportunity to lay on the third, and winning goal, for Travis Dodd.

Perth's strength lies in midfield - with Kasey Wehrman, Troy Halpin, the in form Cpn Boutsianis, and the emerging talent of Ergic to choose from - Stange is blessed with four very talented football players here.

Whilst Wehrman has been dogged by injury for most of the season Stange has a huge wrap on the young midfielder and he should line up from the start in today's game after making a substitute appearance in Glory's last game.

Up against this talented group of players is the 'efficiency personified' Brad Maloney - himself the sufferer of early injury concerns but now slowly getting back to the form that we all expect from him.

Maloney's return to the form of last season is something that coach Eddie Krncevic had as his main Christmas wish, as it is the goalscoring ability of the mid-



Marconi's tyro midfielder Darren McDonald.

the opportunity to show his wares while the expensive Italian import Paolo Marchesini has not come up to expectations.

Add to that more injury worries for the talented Zeljko Babic and it is obvious why Marconi is have difficulty scoring goals.

Glory's central defensive problems have been accentuated by the slow recovery from a broken leg of sweeper Vinko Buljbasic.

His return is eagerly anticipated and there is some chance of the sweeper occupying a place on the bench tonight.

Gareth Naven has done a sterling job as Buljbasic's replacement in the last

field dynamo that Marconi needs most at this stage of the season.

The game will hinge on the Glory's defensive ability - if they can ward off the attacks of Zeljko Babic - the scorer of two goals in their first meeting this season - and his attacking partners.

Glory should have sufficient midfield creativity and finishing prowess to put away a couple of goals past the strong Marconi defence, although young goal-keeper Michael Turnbull has made every post a winner since his promotion to the position and is a player to keep any eye on.



Watkins faces his Spiritual brothers in desperation clash at Bruce Stadium

Canberra Cosmos v Northern Spirit

Preview of tonight's NSL game at Bruce Stadium in Canberra



Ivo De Jesus: Cosmos' rare talent up front can cause Spirit damage tonight.

By John Vrtaric

The game between Canberra Cosmos and Northern Spirit pits together two desperate teams - one team that wants to avoid the dreaded wooden spoon, for the umpteenth time while the other, with ambitions aimed higher, desperate for a win to claw its way back towards the top six.

After a useful start to the season (for Canberra, that is) where they won three of its first seven games Canberra has hit the wall having lost its last four games and can only look upon a single draw in its last five. In those five games it has scored only five goals and conceded 15 - included amongst its losses is a 5-1 drubbing by Carlton.

The arrival of experienced Scotsmen Dave Winnie and Brian Hamilton, together with the earlier purchase of Robbie Hooker, Jason Polak and discarded Spirit striker Daniel Watkins, boosted the quality of the team from the capital greatly.

Performance has improved to such an extent that, even with the recent losses, that the Cosmos have collected more points up to round twelve than they did in the whole of last season.

The Cosmos have a reasonable home record, considering their current position, with two wins out of their seven home games and a positive goal difference, having scored nine and conceded eight.

It will be sweet revenge for Watkins if Canberra is able to pull off a victory after having been loaned out by Spirit at the end of last season. Without a regular starting spot in the star studded Spirit team of last year Watkins was never able to score

regularly, and with the arrival of David Seal this season the youngster sought green pastures with the Cosmos.

Being a regular starter in the Cosmos Watkins has responded with five goals so far this season, although the goals have dried up in recent matches along with the form of the rest of the team.

Northern Spirit has been the disappointment of the season, to their fans, to football fans in general and, most of all, themselves. A berth in the top six in the first season was considered a success and a great stepping stone to greater deeds in their second season.

Second year coach Graham Arnold is finding it difficult to find the right formula having tried over twenty five players before the conclusion of the first half of the season.

With the deteriorating on field performance has come the obligatory decline in the size of the crowd. From an average of over 14,000 in the first season Spirit's crowd has declined to below 10,000 - with just over 6,000 attending its last home game.

should be challenging for the top rather than languishing toward the bottom of the ladder.

The lack of success is putting pressure on coach Arnold who has, at times, been uncertain as to what should be the remedy for his team's ills.

Spirit seemed to have turned the corner after two successive, albeit fortunate wins, over Marconi and Melbourne Knights but a last start 0-3 home loss to Adelaide Force has got everyone scratching their heads again.

With Slater being a game-to-game proposition Spirit need the return to form of Enes and Bingley to inspire the team to a better performance.

The return of striker Perinich could be of great benefit were he to find the form that he displayed with Wollongong Wolves. Having sat out the entire last season Perinich has again been struck down by injury this season and is only now slowly returning to the first team.

What he, and his teammates, now require is a show of faith by coach Arnold and a few games together to build confidence and slowly get back on track.

The key to the game is the fight for the midfield with Enes, Bingley and young Adam Griffiths battling for supremacy against Polak, Hamilton and Gabby Gonzalez.

With both teams having trouble scoring goals the role of strikers Watkins and Ivo de Jesus for Canberra and Perinich and whoever Arnold chooses for Spirit will prove decisive.

Although Canberra has the second worst defensive record in the NSL more than a third of their twenty-two goals conceded came in two recent heavy defeats. Spirit's insipid attack won't find it easy to get past Canberra's defenders, headed by Toplica Popovich, who with this game will assume the mantle of highest number of appearances for the Cosmos.

With both teams lacking confidence and scoring not being either team's forte, a scoreless draw seems the most bankable result.



Daniel Watkins: Cosmos' on-loan striker will face up to his old teammates tonight at Bruce.

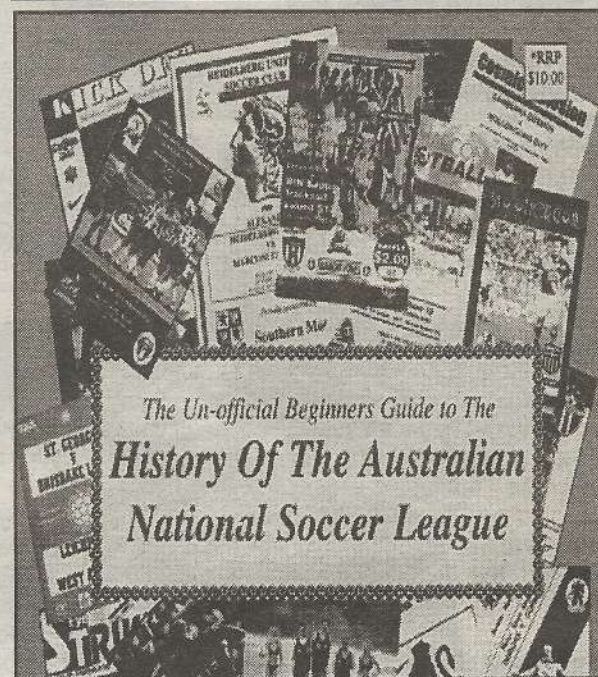
Having experienced difficulty in scoring last season the arrival of Seal, after a number of



Spirit keeper John Perosh. Having a superb season for the struggling glamour side of Australian soccer.

years playing in England, was seen as the answer to Spirit's prayers. After a first game goal all seemed to be falling into place but it has been a very dry spell since. The goals just wouldn't come for Seal and he has been playing Youth team football for the last few weeks.

Injury to captain Robbie Slater for an extended period and the (temporary?) retirement of Ian Crook has not helped their cause but, nevertheless, a team with the talents of Robbie Enes, Matthew Bingley, Matthew Langdon, Mark Rudan, Tony Perinich, Paul Bilokapic and others



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Flowing Wolves show why they are a top six side

SOUTH MELBOURNE 1

Curcija (pen) 87

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 1

Young (pen) 38

Thursday night at Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne. Crowd 4,639 (brought forward R15 game)



MATCH STATS:



SOUTH MELBOURNE:

Jones, Blatsis, Iosofidis, Orlic, Magnacca (Goutzioulis 64), Clarkson, Panopoulos, De Amicis, Trimboli

Curcija, Anastasiadis (Coveny 35). Subs not used: Liparoti.

WOLLONGONG

WOLVES:

Pogliacomini, Stanton, Cervinski, Huxley, Ceccoli, Horsley (c), Reid, Surjan (Spencer 76), Harlock, Young (Masi 68), Petrovski (Souris 86).



Yellows:

South Melbourne: Clarkson (72). Wolves: Young (10), Cervinski (53), Ceccoli (74), Huxley (82).

Best Players

3. HORSLEY(WOLVES)
2. Iosofidis(SMelb)
1. Young(Wolves)

Referee: David Dwight.

By Alan Clark

Two penalties - one just before the end of the first half, the other just before the end of the second half - were enough to have South Melbourne and Wollongong share the points in the Round 15 game at Bob Jane Stadium brought forward to the Thursday night before Christmas.

The game was brought forward as a result of South Melbourne's forthcoming presence in the World Club Championship in Brazil.

Wollongong opened the scoring after 37 minutes from the most innocuous of beginnings.

A high ball was played into South's penalty-area with no Wolves player close to where it was dropping. David Clarkson let it fall, then as it rose, cleared it over his own goal-line with his shoulder.

Upon the advice of the grandstand-side assistant referee Rick Arturi, referee David Dwight awarded Wolves the penalty.

Stuart Young stepped up and placed it to the left of Chris Jones. Until then, Jones had scarcely been involved in the game.

It was a decision that mystified the small home support, and South coach Ange Postecoglou. "I couldn't see it, it was the wrong side of me. I think the linesman gave it. Well, there were half-a-dozen that he missed (so) it must have been really obvious for him to give that one."

Wolves coach Nick Theodorakopoulos was having none of that, puzzled instead by another aspect of the decision.

"I thought it was hand-ball. But if it is hand-ball, why (didn't Clarkson) get a card?"

Theodorakopoulos was reluctant to comment further on this question. "I'm on this bloody bond. I've got to be careful (in what I say)."

The tables were turned just three minutes from the end of normal time when Dwight adjudged a Wolves defender to have handballed in the area and Michael Curcija levelled from twelve yards.

"Let me just say that the (Wolves players) want to know what the penalty was for, and I'll leave it at that," added Theodorakopoulos.

The fluent South Melbourne of last season would have been able to overcome this disadvantage, but this is an off-song South Melbourne, and one battling in the unfamiliar surroundings of the lower half of the table.

"I thought the last half-hour was good", said Postecoglou, using the curate's response, and concentrating on the positive.

What was apparent was that the opening hour was certainly not good for South Melbourne. Links which were in earlier times second-nature, were now not being made. The ball was being turned over too cheaply, and Wollongong were the team more likely to take the points from the game.

Anthony Magnacca was brought into the starting eleven in place of the suspended Goran Lozanovski, but looked uncertain, conceding possession a number of times in the first half.

Yet it would be unfair to single out just one South player for this criticism, as the passing was wayward and the understanding was off in most parts of the formation for much of the game.

"Where we are at the moment, a



The Flying Wolf. Man of the Match Matt Horsley and Fausto De Amicis (blue shirt).

earn for most of the game. And especially in the early part of the second half, when Wolves had two great opportunities to advance the lead, South were under performing, and can consider themselves fortunate to have remained in the contest at all.

Shortly after the re-start, Anthony Surjan headed over from directly in front after clever work down the right by Paul Reid.

Only minutes later, Matthew Horsley and Young combined well to get behind South's defence, and Young's shot was only narrowly past the far post. Gaps were opening up on the wings for Horsley on the right and Neil Harlock down the left.

But in the last half-hour, South piled on the pressure, and eventually it told on the beleaguered Wolves defence.

Midway through the second half came South's best chance

sion just inside his own half and galloped goalwards with Curcija supporting down the right.

Clarkson laid the ball off to Curcija who in turn sent over a perfectly weighted cross to where Vaughan Coveny rose to head, but only onto the outside of the post.

Coveny had another opportunity when he managed to work his way into a one-on-one with Pogliacomini which the tall goalkeeper won.

But it was confusion in the Wolves' back-line which was to result in South's late leveller.

Following sustained pressure which was never convincingly cleared, the referee spotted a Wolves handball.

Curcija stepped up and coolly converted, saving South supporters the need to check their archives to discover the last time South lost three in a row.



Hold on Dave. South's John Anastasiadis attempts to catch Wolves defender David Cervinski during the 1-1 draw at Bob Jane Stadium last Thursday.

point is better than none," said Postecoglou. "(It's) a point against the team in third position, and they're not there by accident. They're a good side. It's not ideal, but it's better than what we've had over the last couple of weeks."

It's a point South looked unlikely to

yet to draw level. It was a flowing move that was previously commonplace at Bob Jane, but its rarity in this game served only to emphasise how things had changed.

Clarkson took posses-

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No 37, September 1999

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CATCH *THE MATILDAS* LIVE IN AUSTRALIA THIS JANUARY

Anissa Tann-Darby is Australia's most capped player with 92 appearances for her country. She is a Graduate in Physical Education and is a qualified coach at the highest level in Australia. Further she is the only woman to coach winning teams at the National State Championships (NSW) and National Club Championships (Marconi). She has been a regular contributor to Women's Soccer World Magazine. Here she previews the upcoming Australia Cup, the first tournament of the year featuring the Matildas in Australia.

The Matildas now get down to the serious stuff of playing soccer, when we play Sweden in the first round of the Australia Cup at 6pm on the 7 January 2000 at North Sydney Oval, the home of NSL club Northern Spirit.

In fact we are making history in that we play the first international soccer match in the new millennium in Australia, and probably the first international in the 21st century anywhere in the world!

International game in the world to be played in the 21st century.

"Let's hope its a win for the Matildas" Sweden are a top class side with a long history of success in international football, they came third in the 1991 World Cup, fifth in the 1995 World Cup which they hosted and seventh in the USA '99, plus a sixth place in the Atlanta Olympics.

As the World Game grows it's getting harder for such a small nation to stay with the big two of USA and China.

If there is a second level of world

porters and they can see top class football in action. It's great that we will go in the record books as the first

Swedes twice, 1-0 in Sweden and on penalty kicks in the Algarve Cup.

Unfortunately they walloped us 1-3 when it mattered, in the World Cup.

In that game they played a 4-5-1 formation and completely swamped us in midfield.

In training over the last few weeks coach Chris Tanzey has been working on methods to overcome this, as well as boosting our level of fitness.

The squad is looking and feeling much fitter than we have ever been; scientific tests by Professor Doug Tumilty of the AIS are proving this.

Tanzey has yet to announce his squad for the Cup, but has had the added bonus of Julie Murray and Sarah Cooper returning from the All Stars Team that toured USA, and the inclusion in camp of veteran Keeper Tracey Wheeler from Perth.

So let's see all the Matildas supporters at the North Sydney Oval to cheer us on for this piece of history.

The players would love to meet you and be happy to sign autographs for any fans, so come along and enjoy what



Sweden's Malin Andersson against the Matildas during World Cup '99. Australia will be out to avenge defeat when they play Sweden at Spirit on Jan 7.



All-action girl Cheryl Salisbury at World Cup '99.

A game for the record books, so get there and say you were part of history.

Thanks to the help of Northern Spirit Soccer Club the Matildas will play one of the glamour world teams in Sweden.

Micky Brock, the promotions manager of The Spirit said, "We are always keen to promote women's soccer as it has such a great future in Australia and the world in general."

"Also it means that once again we can give added value to our regular sup-

porters Sweden, Germany, Brazil and Norway are in this group and it's the next step for the Matildas to join this elite.

FACTS ABOUT THE SWEDES

The Swedes are coached by a woman, Marika Lyfors, and are coming to Australia in preparation for the 2000 Olympics as they are one of the top eight teams in the world.

The Matildas have beaten the

Matildas squad for Australia Cup in January

The 18 player squad will be chosen from:

KEEPERS

Tracey Wheeler, Jo Butland, Lee Ann Trimboli

DEFENDERS

Amy Taylor, Anissa Tann-Darby, Cheryl Salisbury, Diane Alagich, Bridgitte Starr, Sacha Wainwright, Sarah Cooper

MIDFIELD

Bryony Duus, Alison Forman, Heather Garriock, Danielle Small, PC Hepperlin, Amy Wilson, Sharon Black

FORWARDS

Julie Murray, Katrina Boyd, Sunni Hughes, Alicia Ferguson, Kelly Golebiowski

Goalkeeping is the least glamorous position on the soccer pitch, don't you think? In Australia's premier soccer competition, the difference between glory and failure may hinge largely on a keeper's agility and anticipation to reach a ball a split-second before his opponent can slot the ball into the back of the net.

With a new team and new town, Adelaide Force's new man between the posts, Vilson Knezevic, shows us how to whoop it up off the pitch - and the credentials necessary to achieve success on it.

Vilson at 198cm you are the tallest player in the League. Is it a psychological edge knowing that you have something over other players?

If I use it to my full capabilities!

When you were a child you obviously paid attention when your mother said 'eat your vegies and you'll grow.'

I don't believe in it. I'm not a big fan of vegies - I drink a lot of milk.

No matter how exciting the saves, how acrobatic the goalkeeper, if you make a mistake the crowd is immediately your enemy. How true is this?

Two weeks ago they let me know about it against Wollongong. You must be 100%.

Adelaide Force has one of the most efficient defensive set-ups in the league. It has a core of players who have reached the pinnacle of Australian soccer and play good, solid football in the NSL. Vilson, have you made any changes to your game under coach Matic's reign?

No, not really. Concentration is the key. For ninety minutes you must be on the mark.

In one word describe Zoran Matic the man: **Comedian**
the coach: **Disciplined.**

If championships are built on defence, then Adelaide Force should have the foundations of a title winning year - but Vilson, the Force is currently near the bottom of the table!

There have been changes to the tea, i.e. retirements. It takes time to gel together.

Do you know of any pre-match mishaps (missing strips, missing players, two left boots, et.)?

I was wearing the same colour jersey as the referee!

Describe your ideal woman?
A beautiful brunette, blond, black haired beauty!

Complete this sentence, "Love is ..."
Love is LOVE.

If you could have box seats at any event in the world, what would it be?

Chicago Bulls vs New York Knicks, Game 7 in the play-offs.

What is the biggest misconception about sportsmen?
Money and price tags.

An asset to any guy is his taste in shoes. What do you consider to be a girl's best assets?

Legs, butt, face and!

Which member of your squad would top Cleo's most eligible bachelor list?

Ivan Zelic.

Where would you rate?
You decide!

Who is the funniest character in the game today?

Zeljko Susa - the pinhead!

What would you consider to be a romantic night out?

Going to a restaurant and having a couple of glasses of wine - then it becomes even more romantic.

Where will you be on New Year's Eve 1999?

Adelaide ... unfortunately.

Goalkeepers tend to have secret society among themselves - it is said there is a crazy side to all keepers. Is this part of the job description, or are you just crazy by nature?

All 'keepers are crazy!

A few weeks back, Zeljko Susa filled me in on his life and times in Canberra - he evidently now calls Spain home. You have spent some time in Canberra and have now made a move to the 'City of Chuchies'. Where do you call home?

Melbourne will always be my home. Although Adelaide is a lot quieter, I've settled in well here. The people are friendly and compared to Canberra, there's a nightlife!

You have lived away from home now for a couple of years, what gourmet meals can we expect you to whip up in the kitchen?



Vilson Knezevic against Spirit recently. Vilson does a very good impersonation of veteran SBS commentator Les Murray.

Vilson Knezevic

THE GIANT JOKER

Soup of the day, prawns, mussels - the seafood buffet.

How would you describe yourself as a player?
Aggressive.

Which famous person have you been told you look like?

Pat Rafter, Ben Affleck, and Matt Dillon.

Are you a boxers or briefs guy?
Neither!

Do you have a favourite nightspot?
Heat (Melbourne) on Sunday night.

What is the best (or perhaps worst) excuse you've heard someone use for missing training?

The one I used on Wednesday night - 'I missed my ride.'

Do you have any hidden talents?
Singing, and impersonations (Rocky, Stallone, Les Murray)

Vilson, we know that you like to sing, in fact in the past I've even exchanged a few notes and tunes with you. How's the karaoke going?

I've take it to a new level - private places (shower, bedroom). I'll make a career out of it. Ha, ha.



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CROOKY

This weekend Northern Spirit starts a critical three-match streak at North Sydney Oval as we wrestle with inconsistency.

Over the first 13 games we have only played five games at North Sydney Oval but over the next two 12 days it is pay back time as we play three straight games at home, hopefully in front of some of our fans.

I know our crowd numbers have dropped and we can blame nobody but ourselves. The players know that and they are desperate to return to the glory days at Spirit Park.

The players were truly embarrassed by the low crowd, although wet weather didn't help, and then the reception they got as they came off the field.

Getting booing when you play away from home is hard enough to take but when it happens at your home ground, with the boos coming from your own fans, it hits the ego pretty hard.

Three straight matches at Spirit Park gives us a chance to put the terrible start we have experienced well and truly behind us.

Three straight wins, and that's probably what we need if we want to fulfil our season goal, will net us nine points and put us right back in the hunt. Our run of home games at North Sydney Oval starts on Sunday, January 2 against Brisbane Strikers.

This season they have surprised



everyone and any team coached by John Kosmina will battle for the whole 90 minutes. We have to make sure we battle as hard as we did in recent games against Marconi and Melbourne Knights.

Just five days after taking on Brisbane, we return to North Sydney Oval for a match against Sydney United on January 7.

The match against Sydney United has been put back to 8pm, as we will be hosting the Australian Women's soccer team (The Matildas) as they step onto the field for the first time since launching their calendar.

The Matildas play Sweden at 6pm at North Sydney Oval as part of the Australia Cup.

We round off our three-match stint at North Sydney Oval against Perth Glory on January 14, with a return to the 7.30pm timeslot.

Ian Crook
Northern Spirit and England

Forget Springsteen, Diomis is the boss!

By Aidan Ormond

Next time you see NSL referee Con Diomis, call him by the name he really craves ... 'The Boss'.

Don't get me wrong, refereeing is a job no-one but the gutsiest chap could take - and there are a number of good whistlers going around - yet after the recent Breakers v Glory home win at Breakers Stadium the visiting coach Bernd Stange had the temerity (!) to query one of Diomis' more questionable decisions.

As we all know, not only is Bernd Stange one of the game's gentlemen, he has also scaled the heights of international and club football with East Germany and in the Bundesliga these last twenty years, not to mention taking Glory to a finals berth in his first season.

In other words, he is a decent coach with genuine credibility, who would broach such a matter on a professional level.

When he asked Diomis about the incident the referee 'arrogantly' dismissed it, according to Stange, saying 'I'm the boss'.

Well Con, you may think you are, but if every NSL coach, player and fan got to vote on referees, you may well find yourself looking for another summer job.

Even Newcastle-based writer Michael Kmet observed of Diomis' performance that 'the Glory should have hit the lead ... when Con Diomis did not see a blatant handball by Brad Wieczorek in the Breakers' penalty area. The assistant referee had his flag up for about twenty seconds but inexplicably lowered it and play was left to continue.'

Further, Newcastle coach Lee Sterrey admitted he saw the handball,

and he was half a pitch away.

Plus this: 'It was incredible that Diomis judged seven minutes of injury time when the fourth official only showed three,' wrote Kmet.

This comes on top of Zoran Matic's stinging comments about the very same referee. Speaking to Inside Soccer Matic said, 'Con has refereed us four times in the last eight games. Am I married to him? I don't see my wife as often as I see Con. I think he is a lovely boy, but I don't think he can referee.'

'Any-one who has played soccer could see that they were not red cards, but now you have these puppy dogs running around the country who have never played the game, in seniors and juniors. I've had my quarter of Con Diomis - someone else can have him for God sake.'

'The way he refereed in Canberra (the Force's last away game) was an embarrassment. I nearly left with thirty minutes to go because I didn't want to see him there.'

'It was a disgrace. Not that we played well, we deserved to lose, but referees can't have a deal in the score.'

There was also the farcical 'false' red card in the Carlton v Sydney United match recently (which involved another referee).

Add to this some extremely high figures for red cards and yellows, and NSL manager Stephan Kamasz has seen fit to facilitate a mid-season meeting between referees' boss Gary Power, coaches and referees.

Perhaps arrogant referees could also be addressed too?

Continued from page seven

'It means I have got to know them which has been an advantage to me. I don't treat them any different to how I did years ago.'

'It's not like I lose touch with them in some way,' he added.

Speaking of players coming through, Sydney United's Eddy Bosnar has been picked in the upcoming four nation series in Adelaide, ostensibly as a replacement for the World Club Championship bound Con Blatsis.

Blanco feels this may not be Bosnar's only chance to impress.

'I know Eddie very well. I can't say whether it will be his only chance ... it's up to him to show me. He looks more mature and has more personality on the park. It's now up to him.'

'I have a very good relationship with David Ratcliffe (Sydney United coach), and he backed up my judgement about Eddy. All indications are that the young man has a chance, but again it's up to him.'

The Olympics are now just nine months away, but Blanco was keeping his cards pretty close to his chest about players' claims for the final spots.

'In nine months lots of things can happen. Obviously now I would say there are around 30 players in the frame. So the games we will play in the lead-up are important. There is less and less of time now for players to be given their opportunities - sooner or later some players will have to be left behind.'

Reading between the lines would suggest that the squad named for this upcoming tournament may well form the backbone of the Olyroo squad, with a few famous exceptions and overage players.

From now there is this Adelaide tournament, then a camp in March in Europe for about 12 days (destination unknown at this point), and a four-nation tournament here in June.

As for the issue of over-age players, Blanco is firstly not a fan of the idea - he would prefer the Olympics to be a strict U/23 tournament - however, he has some players in mind for those three spots.

'I have five players in my mind. First of all I have to get their approval that they want to be part of it. Obviously then I will trim the five down to three.'

'These over-age players will be picked on the basis of what is best for the team. In other words, where we are weak we will look to add such a player. So with so many people having their say on who is meant to play I think it may be surprising in the end.'

It is possible that the left wingback position is a weakness, thus opening the door for someone like the experienced Stan Lazaridis, in a 3-5-2 formation, with Nick Rizzo playing just inside him as a natural left sided option.

Harry Kewell - who is yet to train or play with the Olyroos - however is a definite starter according to Blanco.

'Harry Kewell is one of the world's greatest players in one of the world's biggest stages, which of course is an advantage for him. Prior to the Olympics it would be ideal for him to be with us.'

'Having said that I know Harry from the national team and the U/17s - I know him very well and in some ways the understanding is already there. And let's not forget, he will be in the same situation as the three over-age players.'

'The ideal situation would be for Harry and the overage players to join the Olyroos before the Olympics. Is this feasible and possible? I will try to make this happen.'

Blanco understandably is not impressed with Leeds, who he calls "negative" for what they have done in the past with Harry Kewell.

'You can't blame Leeds for having a selfish attitude, but in return we have to be selfish. I think in the past we have been soft on some clubs but now we have to fight for our rights and we have the law on our side.'

But there is one player who has no trouble whatsoever when the call comes from Soccer Australia: Hayden Foxe. Last week Southampton expressed an interest in him and Blanco is in no doubt about this player's qualities.

'He can play for Barcelona or Juventus. The best of him is still yet to come but he is coming on now very strongly. He is extraordinary and probably one of the best defenders we have ever produced.'

'If the Olyroos were playing in Italy or Spain they would have been raving about him, like they were when we were in England earlier this year.'

'He should end up in Europe and that is no disrespect to the J-league or Eddie Thomson at his club Hiroshima, who has done a great job with him and Thommo deserves accolades for that.'

'In this day and age of a business approach in football, Foxe, and Emerton's, attitude to representing their country is refreshing.'

OLYROO SQUAD IS:

ALLSOP	Daniel	Manchester City FC
BASER	Tansel	Trabzonspor FC
BOSNAR	Eddie	Sydney United SC
BRESCIANO	Marco	Empoli FC
BURNS	Jacob	Parramatta Power
COYNE	Chris	West Ham FC
CULINA	Jason	AFC Ajax
DAMIANOS	Bill	Xanthi Skoda FC
DIDULICA	Joseph	AFC Ajax
EMERTON	Brett	Sydney Olympic SC
FOX	Hayden	Sanfrecce Hiroshima
GRELLA	Vince	Empoli FC
LAYBUTT	Stephen	Beilmar
Hiratsuka/Parramatta	Power SC	
NEILL	Lucas	Millwall FC
RIZZO	Nick	Crystal Palace FC
STERJOVSKI	Mile	Parramatta Power SC
WEHRMAN	Kasey	Perth Glory SC
ZANE	Clayton	Molde FC
ZELIC	Ivan	Adelaide Force SC
ZOIS	Peter	NAC Breda

One defender, Joe Simunic, will however almost certainly not be playing for the Olyroos. Blanco is a fan of his and actually visited him.

'A year ago I spoke to him - it was very cordial and quite a long chat - after it was said to me on the quiet that he perhaps wanted to play for Australia. I did say to him that if he was going to change his mind, I would welcome him.'

'We agreed to give him some time but as that was over a year ago I assume he does not want to play for us. I don't think you need longer than half a minute to decide if you want to play for your country.'

Blanco's contract will be up with Soccer Australia in the year 2000, after that it is up to those in power to decide how he can be best used.

And without sounding like a campaign manager for him, his South American background and experience in the local game would be useful to Frank Farina in our quest for World Cup qualification.

As Blanco said, 'I am only thinking of next week and next September with the Olympics. After that who knows, we will all have to reassess what we want to do.'

*The first matches in the Olyroo series will be on 9 January at Hindmarsh Stadium. The other teams in the tournament are Nigeria, South Korea and Egypt.

Aussie Schoolboys' UK tour a stunning success

The Australian Schoolboys Soccer team returned last week from their hectic 10-match United Kingdom tour undefeated in their international fixtures.

In addition to the five full internationals, the team played both Manchester United and Fulham youth teams as well as regional representative teams.

The Aussie tourists won five matches and had four draws from their 10 matches, the only blemish was a 2-0 loss against the very strong South East England team (and even in this game a missed penalty and a couple of very close chances could have swung the match the Aussies' way.)

Wins were against Welsh Colleges and Welsh Boys Club of Wales both with 3-0 scorelines, Swadlands College (3-1), Fulham (3-2). The international against Welsh Schools was cancelled due to heavy rain.

The best result, however, was

against the Ireland Schoolboys team who had been undefeated for the previous three years until this match where the Aussies scored a 4-3 win.

A 1-2 loss looked to be the final result in the 88th minute. The Aussie ended up winning the match in front of a crowd of over 600 drum-banging and vocal locals with three goals in the final five minutes.

Australian Coach Chris James called the result one of the best performances from any Australian Schoolboys side ever.

Best player on tour was Newcastle striker and Australian captain Chad Mansley followed by Carlton midfielder Steve Martin. Mansley was also top goalscorer with 12 goals in 10 matches.

Inside Soccer will have full details of all the matches next week.

FULL RESULTS:

1 December v Swadlands College : 3-1 (Mansley, Tarka, Ferrante) . Player of the Match : Martin (Vic)

2 December v Kent Schoolboys : 1-

1 (Mitchell). Player of the Match : Dimozantos (Vic)

3 December v South East England Schools : 0-2. Player of the Match : Gaspar (WA)

6 December v Boys Club of Wales : 3-0 (Mansley 2, Dimitrievski) . Player of the Match : Mansley (NSW)

7 December v Welsh Colleges : 3-0 (Mansley 2, Mitchell) . Player of the Match : Mansley (NSW)

8 December v Manchester United : 3-3 (Mansley 2, Dreger) . Player of the Match : Mansley (NSW)

13 December v English Colleges : 3-3 (Mansley, Bresciano, Martin) . Player of the Match : Bresciano (Vic)

15 December v Northern Ireland Schools : 1-1 (Mansley) . Player of the Match : Ferrante (SA)

17 December v Ireland Schools : 4-3 (Martin, Mansley, Mitchell, Dreger) . Player of the Match : Jullienne (ACT)

20 December v Fulham : 3-2



(Mansley 2, Martin) . Player of the Match: Dreger (Qld)

Confidence at Wolves high after encouraging start

By Greg Blake

Although the current season shapes as one of enormous promise for Wollongong City few greet the club's challenge with anything other than caution.

Insiders are rightfully cautious, for apart from a couple of fleeting finals cameos in the 90's this club has been a genuine contender only once in two decades.

That was ten years ago, when the Wolves set a new standard in ineptitude by becoming the only club in NSL history to win the minor premiership and then miss the grand final altogether, bowing out in straight games.

And the pundits are still decidedly cautious, for this Wollongong team and its coach, Nick

Theodorakopoulos, isn't too far removed from its 1997/98 finals-bound counterpart.

That year the Wolves at times threatened thunderstorms but came up drizzling too often when it counted.

In 97/98 the Wolves rode a wave of enthusiasm which was often irresistible but lacked substance.

Despite the deceptive 3-2 scoreboard loss, Wollongong were slaughtered by South Melbourne at Bob Jane Stadium that year, that match providing an accurate litmus paper for the Wolves in 97/98.

Two years down the track and Wollongong's spark isn't as dazzling but in its place there appears a reliable, dogged consistency which suggests Nick T's boys are in the contest for real this time around.

Third on the ladder coming into Christmas, Wollongong are starting to

convince the undecided.

In the last game before Christmas the Wolves showed some genuine authority in a 1-1 draw at South Melbourne.

"This is a good team, I have no doubt about that," said South boss Ange Postecoglou after that game.

"I've thought that for a while now and I think they showed tonight that they deserve plenty of respect this year."

After going behind at home to the Wolves last Thursday night South Melbourne came storming back and threatened to sweep Wollongong aside.

But this current Wolves team is no longer prepared to curtsy and leave the room in the presence of NSL royalty.

"The fact is that we came here and wanted a point at worst and we got it," said Theodorakopoulos after the Bob Jane stalemate.

"We approached the game in a positive way, we defended well when we had to and we're happy to go back and have Christmas with a point in Melbourne."

Although there was nothing particularly impressive about Wollongong's display on the night, the mere fact

that they manouvered a point at the home of the champs in such an authoritative manner bodes well for the Wolves.

Always a threat at home, Wollongong are now taking some confidence into road games where, to date this summer, the club has lost just once away from home and scored a current league high of 13 goals on foreign territory.

And a good, even spread of goalscorers and a reliable and healthy roster of playing staff suggests the stability of a team destined to maintain the pace.

"I don't know all the stats, but it is interesting to note (those things)," says Theodorakopoulos.

"But I do believe we are in the fortunate position of having potential match-winners all over the park."

"We've obviously had our share of injury problems, but looking at the big picture we're relatively injury-free at the moment and squad-wise, from the way we are playing at the moment, any coach would be happy with that."

In considering the 97/98 team against the current one, the most telling stat on Wollongong appears to reflect the new-found confidence of a team prepared to attack games.

Two years ago the Wolves ranked only behind South Melbourne in last half hour goals, suggesting a team which often had to rally under pressure to get results.

Thus far this season Wollongong leads the league in opening half hour goals and including six in the first quarter hour of games, suggesting a team which is hitting the paddock ready to set the agenda rather than chase a target.

"We are very much aware of that," he acknowledged.

"We often talk about and it is certainly something we try and work at."

And what about proving wrong those cautious doubters - your correspondent sheepishly admitting to his place amongst



Wolves' inspirational Matt Horsley, right, against South's Fausto De Amicis.

their number - who considered Wollongong as potential cannon-fodder this summer?

"Obviously you don't know much about football, Blakey," retorted the Wollongong boss.

"But you make mistakes and we forgive you."

"Look, we set ourselves goals at the start of the year; anywhere between first and sixth at the end of 34 rounds is more than enough for us."

"Thirteen games in and we're third, so we're on course."

"We're quietly comfortable with that."

USA BRINGS YOUNG SQUAD TO AUSTRALIA

The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team will bring a young squad consisting mostly of college stars to the Australia Cup, played for the US in Melbourne and Adelaide from Jan. 7-13, 2000.

The Americans will face the Czech Republic (Jan. 7), Sweden (Jan. 10) and Australia (Jan. 13) in the four-team, six-game tournament that will kick off Olympic preparations with the first games of 2000.

With the Women's World Cup veterans still in contract negotiations with U.S. Soccer, numerous young stars will get their first chance to make an impact in a full international match.

Twelve members of the 18-player roster played college soccer last season, three are high school seniors poised to enter college next fall and just three are out of college.

Almost all the young players have

seen significant action with the U.S. Under-21 and Under-18 National Teams. Leading the way for the newcomers is forward Mandy Clemens from Santa Clara University, who swept both post-season player of the year awards, winning the Missouri Athletic Club Player of the Year and the Hermann Trophy. She scored 24 goals with 23 assists to lead her team through an undefeated regular season.

Seven players on the roster will be looking for their first cap. Nine more players have just three caps or less. Just one player on the roster has scored a goal in a full international match, that being midfielder Aly Wagner who tallied against Japan in May of this year.

Ten member of last summer's Under-21 Nordic Cup championship team will make the trip, including forward Susan Bush, Wagner and defender Michelle French, all part of the USA's pre-Women's World Cup residency camp in Florida.

French has captained the youth national team for the past three years. Joining that trio will be Nordic Cup alumni midfielders Jenny Mascaro (formerly Streiffer) and Heather Aldama, and defender Danielle Slaton. Both goalkeepers -- Siri Mullinix and Lakeysia Beene -- have been part of Under-21 Nordic Cup teams for the past three years.

The three high school seniors are midfielders Veronica Zepeda and Aleisha Cramer (also Nordic Cup veterans) and

defender Nandi Pryce.

Cramer has played for the U.S. U-16, U-18, U-21 and full national teams in the past two years. When she played against Ukraine at the end of 1998, she became the third youngest U.S. player ever to play a full international at 16 years, 141 days. The veteran member of the group, by far, is Thori Bryan, who has 53 caps as was on the USA's 1995 Women's World Cup Team.

Rounding out the roster is defender Kelly Lindsey, midfielders Mary Frances Monroe and Nikki Serlenga, and forwards Christy Welsh and Sherrill Kester. Lindsey, Serlenga and Welsh all showed extremely well for their college teams at the 1999 College Cup in San Jose, Calif., earning them call-ups for the Australia Cup.

Welsh put together an amazing freshman year, scoring 27 goals with 13 assists for Penn State.

With a new head coach not yet named after the resignation of Tony DiCicco, Women's World Cup assistant coaches Lauren Gregg and Jay Hoffman will guide the team in the Australia Cup.

United States Women's National Team Roster
JAN. 7 VS. CZECH REPUBLIC,
JAN. 10 VS. SWEDEN, JAN. 13 VS. AUSTRALIA

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Hometown	College	Caps/Goals
1	Mullinix, Siri	G	5-8	145	5/22/78	Greensboro, N.C.	North Carolina	1
2	Bryan, Thori	D	5-8	140	4/17/74	Joppatowne, Md.	NC State	53/0
3	Lindsey, Kelly	D	5-7	140	9/3/79	Omaha, Neb.	Notre Dame	0/0
4	Pryce, Nandi	D	5-10	140	5/30/82	Casselberry, Fla.	CF United	0/0
5	Clemens, Mandy	F	5-5	125	9/3/78	San Diego, Ca.	Santa Clara	1/0
6	Zepeda, Veronica	M	5-0	100	6/11/82	Riverside, CA	Claremont Stars	1/0
7	Wagner, Aly	M	5-5	120	8/10/80	San Jose, Ca.	Santa Clara	6/1
8	Monroe, Mary Frances	M	5-0	115	2/7/80	Tantriville, Ct.	UConn	0/0
9	Bush, Susan	F	5-4	120	11/10/80	Houston, Tex.	North Carolina	3/0
10	Cramer, Aleisha	M	5-10	130	7/29/82	Lakewood, CO	Colorado Rush	2/0
11	French, Michelle	D	5-4	135	1/27/77	Kent, Wash.	Portland	3/0
12	Welsh, Christy	F	5-10	150	2/27/81	Massapequa Park, NY	Penn State	0/0
13	Mascaro, Jenny	M	5-6	130	5/25/78	Baton Rouge, La.	Notre Dame	1/0
14	Aldama, Heather	M	5-2	110	12/1/78	Redlands, Ca.	Santa Clara	2/0
15	Serlenga, Nikki	M	5-7	130	6/20/78	San Diego, Calif.	Santa Clara	0/0
16	Kester, Sherrill	F	5-3	120	3/7/78	High Point, N.C.	Duke	0/0
17	Slaton, Danielle	D	5-8	135	6/10/80	San Jose, Ca.	Santa Clara	1/0
18	Beene, Lakeysia	G	5-8	135	3/9/78	Gold River, Calif.	Notre Dame	0



S-NEWS

INSIDE SOCCER'S AUSTRALIAN NEWS AND GOSS

NSL CHANGES

The Round 14 game between Sydney Olympic and Perth Glory at Belmore Sports Ground will now be played on Monday, January 3, 2000 at 6.30pm.

Ø The Round 14 Game between Football Kingz and Canberra Cosmos at North Harbour Stadium will start at 6.00pm.

Ø The Round 15 game between Northern Spirit and Sydney United at North Sydney Oval will start at 8.00pm.

Ø The Round 15 game between Marconi Stallions and Parramatta Power at Marconi Stadium will start at 5.00pm.

Ø The Round 15 game between Carlton and Football Kingz at Olympic Park will start at 8.15pm.

Ø The Round 16 game between Newcastle Breakers and South Melbourne at Breakers Stadium will be played on Wednesday, February 2, 2000 at 7.30pm.

Ø Details of the Round 16 game between Parramatta Power and Football Kingz to be announced

Ø The Round 16 game between Wollongong Wolves and Carlton at Brandon Park will start at 5.00pm.

Ø The Round 17 game between Perth Glory and Football Kingz at Perth Oval will be played on Sunday, March 26, 2000 at 4.00pm.

Ø The Round 18 game between Gippsland Falcons and Parramatta Power at Falcons Stadium will start at 6.00pm.

Ø The Round 19 game between Parramatta Power and Northern Spirit at Parramatta Stadium will be played on Saturday, January 29, 2000 at 7.30pm.

Ø The Round 21 game between Parramatta Power and Adelaide Force at Parramatta Stadium will be played on Saturday, February 2, 2000 at 7.30pm.

The Round 21 game between Carlton and Marconi at Olympic Park will be played on Sunday, February 13, 2000 at 6.00pm.

Ø The Round 23 game between Carlton

and Adelaide City Force at Olympic Park will be played on Sunday, February 27, 2000 at 6.00pm.

Ø The Round 29 game between Sydney United and Carlton at Sydney United Sports Centre will start at 4.00pm.

BENEFIT GIG SHOWS WHY IT'S THE WORLD GAME

Last week's benefit gig for troops stationed in East Timor was a great idea, with the likes of Kylie Minogue, John Farnham and The Living End playing. Played at the Dili Soccer Stadium was just another reminder to Channels 9 & 7 - the show's broadcasters - that soccer really is the world game. Speaking of soccer in East Timor, a wonderful way to forge even more links with the locals would be to actually play a game of soccer at the stadium. Northern Spirit has in its ranks Antonio Faria who has East Timor family links. Spirit v Dili in a charity challenge match sponsored and funded by the government? Now that's an idea. And just imagine the merchandising prospects for Spirit's new Kappa shirt?



AUSTRALIA U16S IN 1986

Here's one for history buffs. Above is the Aussie U16s in 1986. Do you recognise any of these players? Next week we will show the pic again and see if we pick out who you did. A clue. There a players here from the current Glory, South, Knights and Olympic squads, plus an Aussie playing in London

Competition winners

The winner of the Alex Ferguson autobiography is

KERRY SELLIS SCONE NSW

Prize sent out later this week



The winner of the George Best autobiography is

KEN DERBY DANDENONG VIC

Prize sent out later this week

The winner of the Robbie Slater autobiography is

ARTHUR PINKOWSKI BUFF POINT NSW

Prize sent out later this week



GUNNERS' TITLE HOPES FADE WITH LOSS

Arsenal are in danger of becoming detached from the top two after their 3-2 defeat against Coventry at Highfield Road.

The title-chasing Gunners were rocked by first-half goals from Gary McAllister and Mustapha Hadji as an inspired Coventry took command.

Fredrik Ljungberg looked to have given Arsenal hope when he pulled one back after 67 minutes but just four minutes later Coventry had restored their two goal advantage thanks to a deft flick from Robbie Keane.

A stunning piece of individual skill from substitute Davor Suker made it 3-2 just before the final whistle but it proved too little too late for Arsenal who face Leeds at Highbury tonight.

Leeds stayed two points clear at the top of the Premiership with a 2-1 win over Leicester but there were mixed fortunes for the teams chasing them.

Manchester United kept track with the leaders by beating Bradford 4-0 but third-placed Sunderland and fourth-placed Arsenal both lost ground as they slumped to away defeats.

Leeds had suffered the early shock of going a goal behind at Elland Road when Leicester capitalised on poor defending by right-back Gary Kelly to take the lead.

Left-winger Stefan Oakes seized upon the opportunity, whipping in a curling cross which was initially too high for Emile Heskey, but there was Tony Cottee in prime position to head home his ninth goal of the season.

But Leeds were magnificent thereafter and Michael Bridges levelled matters after 29 minutes following good work from Harry Kewell.

The goal ended Bridges' six-game drought and he became the creator for Leeds' second just before half-time as he fed Lee Bowyer who lashed a venomous right-foot shot into the top right-hand corner.

Leeds dominated the second period but were unable to add to their tally.

Leeds' bitter Pennine rivals Manchester United kept in touch in second place though they left it late before seeing off struggling Bradford 4-0.

In pouring rain and on a dreadful surface the battling Bantams held United for 75 minutes on their first visit to Old Trafford in 64 years.

But Sir Alex Ferguson made a double substitution sending on Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole, a move that did the trick with four goals in 13 minutes from Quinton Fortune, Yorke, Cole and Roy Keane.

Sunderland, who started the day in third place, were hammered 5-0 at Goodison Park by Everton.

Peter Reid's side failed to cope without star striker Kevin Phillips who was ruled out by injury and they were 3-0 down at the break after

two goals from Don Hutchison and one from Francis Jeffers.

And on a great day for the Toffees' faithful and new supremo Bill Kenwright, Everton added second-half strikes from Mark Pembroke and Kevin Campbell.

There was also a thrilling game at St James's Park as Newcastle and Liverpool played out an entertaining 2-2 draw.

Alan Shearer appeared to get a touch on a Nolberto Solano free-kick with 11 minutes gone to put the Magpies ahead but Michael Owen levelled 20 minutes when he fired a low shot past Steve Harper.

Owen scored his and Liverpool's second seven minutes into the second period only for Duncan Ferguson to restore parity on 67 minutes.

Both sides went close in the closing stages but a winning goal proved elusive.

The pressure lifted slightly for Premiership managers John Gregory and Danny Wilson as their sides claimed vital victories.

Gregory's Aston Villa inflicted a 2-0 defeat on Derby at Pride Park, the goals coming from George Boateng (68) and Ian Taylor (78).

Middlesbrough introduced the 'New Maradona' in the second half when 17-year-old Carlos Marinelli got his first taste of Premiership football since his £1.5million transfer but Wednesday managed to hang on.

And Wilson's Sheffield Wednesday gained only their second win of the season with a 1-0 home win against Middlesbrough.

The only goal of the game came from Peter Atherton after 28 minutes, Wednesday's skipper reacting quickest to power the ball past Boro 'keeper Mark Schwarzer from close range.

In the day's earlier top flight action, Tottenham put Wednesday's FA Cup humiliation at Newcastle behind them with a 4-0 victory over Watford.

David Ginola struck his first Premiership goal of the season with a superb 27th minute solo effort.

Steffen Iversen nodded in a second goal - his 12th this season - just six minutes later to put Spurs in command.

After the break Ginola tormented two defenders before sending over the perfect cross from the right for Tim Sherwood to head home with ease.

And it was the England midfielder who completed the scoring seven minutes from time.

Tore Andre Flo struck twice as Chelsea won 2-1 at Southampton.

The Blues were ahead within 18 minutes when Flo steered an angled shot past Saints goalkeeper Paul Jones and the Norwegian broke through again just before half-time as Southampton appealed in vain for offside.

Kevin Davies pulled one back ten minutes

from time but the Blues, whose starting line-up was made up entirely of overseas players, held on for the points.

Wimbledon and West Ham shared the points after an entertaining 2-2 draw at Selhurst Park.

Hermann Hreidarsson headed home Alan Kimble's 33rd minute corner to give the Dons the lead but Trevor Sinclair levelled deep into first-half injury time, heading home Paolo di Canio's left wing cross.

The Hammers snatched the lead 10 minutes from time when Frank Lampard was left unmarked in the box to head home.

But within five minutes Wimbledon were level again thanks to an extraordinary error by Hammers goalkeeper Shaka Hislop.

He appeared to have comfortably claimed Kimble's right-wing corner but inexplicably dropped it as he came to ground and Neal Ardley was left to poke it into the empty net from five yards.

Manchester City overtook Huddersfield at the top as goals from Danny Granville and Shaun Goater - his 14th of the season put paid to West Bromwich.

Huddersfield, who started the day at the top of the pile, were held to a draw by much improved Crewe, who had not conceded a goal for 467 minutes until Chris Beech breached their defence.

But the division's leading scorers could not add to the total and Colin Little's 63rd minute header ensured a share of the spoils.

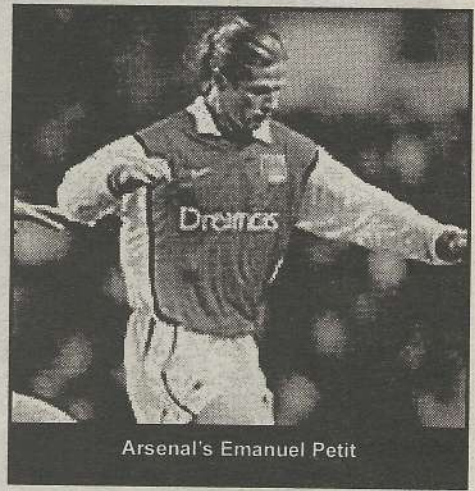
Charlton struck twice in a minute after teenager Andy Martin put them in front with his first goal for the club. John Salako netted against his old team-mates and Martin Pringle knocked in the winner before Palace could draw breath, to move the Addicks up to third place.

Fulham were held at home for the fifth time in the league as Ipswich extended their unbeaten run to nine games in a goalless affair at Craven Cottage - but they slipped a place in the table.

Supersub Ian Moore snatched victory for Stockport with his second goal in injury time. Moore, forced on to the bench because he was delayed by motorway hold-ups, equalised after Neil Emblen and Ludovic Pollet gave Wolves the advantage before the break, cancelling out Tony Dinning's fourth goal in five games.

Barnsley kept on the heels of the leaders in fifth place, dismantling disappointing Grimsby, who have gone ten games without a clean sheet. Craig Hignett took his tally to five in two games and Matt Appleby rounded off a convincing 0-3 victory.

Sheffield United maintained their improvement under Neil Warnock by stunning the



Arsenal's Emanuel Petit

Brummies at St Andrews where City had only lost once all season.

Birmingham old boy Paul Devlin scored the first after four minutes and then provided the second for Martin Smith after 64 minutes to give the Blades their first away win since last August.

Queen's Park Rangers - only one point from five away games - did themselves few favours at Norwich. Tim Breacker put through his own goal after 25 minutes and Stewart Wardley banged in his eighth to level.

But Chris Llewellyn grabbed the points for the Canaries three minutes from the end, leaving time for Richard Langley to be sent off for a second yellow card before receiving his own marching orders in the dying seconds.

Nottingham Forest had the consolation of scoring their first goal away from home in 437 minutes when Andy Johnson equalised Per Frandsen's 18th minute opener at Ewood Park. But Blackburn took the points when the outstanding Damien Duff was pulled down in the box and Lee Carsley converted the 68th minute spot kick.

Tranmere broke a sequence of six visits to Walsall without a win when Andy Parkinson in the 67th minute and Wayne Allison seven later, saw them come from behind and seize the points. Walsall failed to end a run of one win in 13 matches despite Gabor Bukran putting them in front two minutes after half-time.

Bottom of the table Swindon had some seasonal cheer when Chris Hay put them in front after 16 minutes against Portsmouth, without a win now in 11 games. But Steve Claridge levelled 10 minutes from the end to give Pompey a rare point and to maintain a good record of three wins and two draws in managerless Portsmouth's last five trips to the County Ground.

Coventry (2) 3 Arsenal (0) 2

Coventry: Hedman, Telfer, Williams, Breen, Froggatt, Hadji, Palmer, McAllister, Chippo (Gustafsson 90), Roussel, Keane (Whelan 81). Subs Not Used: Ogrizovic, Normann, Eustace.

Goals: McAllister 6, Hadji 40, Keane 71. Arsenal: Seaman, Dixon, Keown, Adams, Winterburn, Ljungberg, Petit, Grimandi (Suker 60), Overmars, Henry, Kanu.

Subs Not Used: Manninger, Silvinho, Luzhny, Barrett. Booked: Grimandi, Henry.

Goals: Ljungberg 67, Suker 86. Att: 22,757

Derby (0) 0 Aston Villa (0) 2

Derby: Poom, Laursen, Elliott, Prior, Dorigo (Schnoor 46), Bohinen (Christie 65), Burley, Johnson, Powell, Strupar, Burton (Robinson 75). Subs Not Used: Hoult, Carbonari.

Booked: Strupar, Prior. Aston Villa: James, Southgate, Ehiogu, Barry, Watson, Boateng, Merson (Stone 75), Taylor, Wright, Joachim, Carbone (Vassell 56).

Subs Not Used: Cutler, Ghrayib, Calderwood. Goals: Boateng 68, Taylor 78. Att: 33,222

Everton (3) 5 Sunderland (0) 0

Everton: Gerrard, Unsworth, Weir, Gough, Dunne, Barmby (Moore 74), Hutchison, Collins, Pembroke, Campbell, Jeffers (Cleland 74). Subs Not Used: Watson, Cadamarteri, Simonsen.

Booked: Weir. Goals: Hutchison 16, 26, Jeffers 41, Pembroke 61, Campbell 72.

Sunderland: Sorensen, Gray (Reddy 45), Bould, Butler, Makin, Schwarz, Roy (Williams

32), McCann, Summerbee, Kilbane, Quinn.

Subs Not Used: Marriott, Rae, Oster. Booked: Kilbane, McCann.

Att: 40,017

Leeds (2) 2 Leicester (1) 1

Leeds: Martyn, Kelly, Radebe, Woodgate, Harte, Bowyer, Bakke, McPhail, Kewell, Bridges, Huckerby (Wilcox 77).

Subs Not Used: Mills, Jones, Duberry, Robinson.

Booked: Martyn, Bridges, Wilcox.

Goals: Bridges 29, Bowyer 45.

Leicester: Arphexad, Elliott, Taggart, Gilchrist (Zagorakis 65), Sinclair, Savage, Izzet, Eadie, Oakes, Cottee, Heskey.

Subs Not Used: Gunnlaugsson, Campbell, Thomas, Hodges.

Booked: Zagorakis.

Goals: Cottee 10.

Att: 40,105

Man Utd (0) 4 Bradford (0) 0

Man Utd: Bosnich, G. Neville, P. Neville, Stam (Wallwork 81), Silvestre, Keane, Scholes (Yorke 66), Butt, Sheringham (Cole 66), Solskjaer, Fortune.

Subs Not Used: Taibi, Cruyff.

Goals: Fortune 75, Yorke 79, Cole 87, Keane 88.

Bradford: Clarke, Halle, Myers (Saunders 81), McCall, Wetherall, Lawrence (Beagrie 55), O'Brien, Windass, Sharpe, Mills, Redfearn (Blake 81).

Subs Not Used: Davison, Westwood. Booked: Redfearn, Halle.

Att: 55,188

Newcastle (1) 2 Liverpool (1) 2

Newcastle: Harper, Barton, Hughes, Dabizas,

Pistone, Solano (Gallacher 73), Lee, Speed, Dyer (Glass 53), Ferguson (Ketsbaia 90), Shearer.

Subs Not Used: Given, Marcelino.

Goals: Shearer 12, Ferguson 67.

Liverpool: Westerveld, Song, Carragher, Hyypia, Matteo, Gerrard, Hamann, Murphy (Fowler 82), Berger, Camara (Heggem 69), Owen.

Subs Not Used: Friedel, Staunton, Traore.

Goals: Owen 31, 52.

Att: 36,445

Sheff Wed (1) 1 Middlesbrough (0) 0

Sheff Wed: Smicek, Nolan, Walker, Atherton, Hinchcliffe, Alexandersson, Jonk, Sonner (Haslam 66), McKeever (Cresswell 86), De Bilde, Booth.

Subs Not Used: Pressman, Sibon, Nicolson.

Booked: Jonk, Sonner, Booth, Cresswell.

Goals: Atherton 28.

Middlesbrough: Schwarzer, Fleming, Vickers, Festa (Gavin 46), Stamp (Ricard 75), Stockdale, Mustoe, Juninho, Maddison, Deane, Armstrong (Marinelli 46).

Subs Not Used: Beresford, Baker.

Booked: Festa, Stamp, Deane.

Att: 28,531

Southampton (0) 1 Chelsea (2) 2

Southampton: Jones, Dodd, Lundekvam,

Richards, Benali, Le Tissier, Oakley (Tessem 74), Soltvedt, Kachoul (Boa Morte 52), Pahars, Beattie (Davies 52).

Subs Not Used: Hughes, Moss.

Booked: Oakley, Le Tissier.

Goals: Davies 80.

Chelsea: De Goey, Petrescu (Morris 87),

Thome, Leboeuf, Babayaro, Ferrer,

Deschamps, Poyet, Di Matteo, Ambrosetti (Harley 74), Flo.

Subs Not Used: Nicholls, Cudicini, Terry.

Booked: Leboeuf, Ferrer, Deschamps, Babayaro.

Goals: Flo 18, 43.

Att: 15,232

Tottenham (2) 4 Watford (0) 0

Tottenham: Walker, Carr, Perry, Campbell, Taricco, Nielsen, Sherwood, Clemence, Ginola (Dominguez 75), Iversen, Armstrong.

Subs Not Used: Gower.

Booked: Taricco.

Goals: Ginola 28, Iversen 33, Sherwood 56, 83.

Watford: Chamberlain, Cox, Williams (Gudmundsson 46), Page, Robinson, Hyde,

Palmer, Johnson, Perpetuini (Miller 46), Ngonge (Foley 46), Smith.

Booked: Perpetuini, Hyde.

Att: 36,089

Ref: M Reed (Birmingham).

Wimbledon (1) 2 West Ham (1) 2

Wimbledon: Sullivan, Cunningham, Kimble, Earle, Euell, Gayle, Ardley, Leaburn (Hughes 72), Badir, Andersen, Hreidarsson.

Subs Not Used: Davis, Francis, Waehler, Gray.

Booked: Euell.

Goals: Hreidarsson 33, Ardley 85.

West Ham: Hislop, Ruddock, Sinclair, Di Canio, Wanchope, Foe, Ferdinand, Lampard, Minto,

Cole, Margas.

Subs Not Used: Potts, Stimac, Keller, Carrick,

Forrest.

Booked: Lampard, Foe, Wanchope.

Goals: Sinclair 45, Lampard 81.

Att: 21,180

WIGAN MAINTAIN UNBEATEN RUN



Wigan's Andy Liddell

Wigan kept up their record as the only unbeaten side in the country with a comfortable win at Notts County who have now won only once in 11 games.

Michael O'Neill put Athletic in front after 35 minutes and Andy Liddell wrapped up the points in the 74th minute.

Preston dropped to third place despite extending their unbeaten run to 17 games against Wrexham, a side they have already beaten three times this season.

The Welsh club now have no wins in 14 league games, this their fifth draw on the trot, ending North End's seven-match winning streak.

A goal from Jason Roberts five minutes from time gave Bristol Rovers their sixth win on the trot and handed Millwall their first defeat in eight games, ending a six match winning run.

The young striker cracked in his 12th of

the season to put the Pirates briefly on top of the table until Wigan's victory at Meadow Lane later in the day.

The Gigg Lane hoodoo struck high-flying Burnley who were three down to Bury after half an hour and down to ten men. The Clarets have only won once in 18 visits this century.

And they were trailing when Andy Preece netted after seven minutes and added a penalty after 11 minutes when Steve Davis was sent off for deliberate hand ball. Matt Barrass and Adrian Littlejohn extended the lead before Bury's Chris Swailes was red-carded and Ronnie Jepson and John Mullin scored late goals, not enough to keep the Bury side from their first home win in six games.

Brentford pulled off the first win in six matches, thanks to two goals in five minutes from Lloyd Owusu and Martin Rowlands. Peter Beadle's reply for City on the whistle was no consolation.

Blackpool made it eight games without a clean sheet when Phil Robinson and Graham Kavanagh put Stoke in the driving seat at Bloomfield Road where a late consolation goal from Adam Nowland made little difference.

Fellow strugglers Cardiff and Reading battled away at Ninian Park where a 75th minute goal from Kevin Nugent proved decisive to give the Welshmen some daylight at the bottom.

Rodney Rowe's first goal since joining from York City put Gillingham on the road to a ninth match unbeaten, and Colchester fell further behind when Nicky Southall netted. Colchester had Alan White sent off and Steve McGavin's effort was largely irrelevant.

At the foot of the table Chesterfield remain rooted despite taking a point at Kenilworth Road, where Luton have lost only once in the league this season. Adam Locke gave the Hatters the lead after 38 minutes but

David Reeves grabbed an equaliser in the 74th minute, his eighth of the season.

However, it is now 22 matches in all competitions since John Duncan's side tasted victory.

Scunthorpe took their third point in eight games when Chris Hope snatched a draw in their first meeting with Oldham for 26 years. Steve Whitehall gave the Latics the lead after 31 minutes but there was Hope 16 minutes from the end.

Wycombe registered their first home win over Bournemouth at the eighth attempt with goals from Steve Brown on 26 minutes and Sean Devine on 55 minutes.

They also profited from the early dismissal of the Cherries' Christer Warren, sent off for serious foul play. Bournemouth's goal came from James Hayter on 42 minutes.

Cambridge continued a dismal record of no away wins all season when they went down to a Matt Murphy goal at Oxford United, which ensured they failed to keep a clean sheet for the 22nd time. They also had Martin McNeil sent off as Oxford clocked up their first win in six games.

Rotherham kept the heat turned up at the top of Division Three as they dished out a 5-0 thrashing to Barry Fry's Peterborough.

Danny Hudson and Paul Warne (twice) took the match beyond Peterborough, who had been beaten at home only once this season, the Posh, now with two from the last 15 points. Steve Thompson and Leo Fortune-West completed the rout to give Rotherham their fourth win in six visits to London Road.

Barnet stayed on top, a point ahead of Rotherham, despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Brighton, Paul Watson netting for the Seagulls, John Doolan for the table toppers.

Darlington dropped a place after Hull held

them to a goalless draw, while Leyton Orient stayed pinned to the bottom of the league when Jamaican Walter Boyd bagged the winner for Swansea, now 10 games unbeaten and in third place.

Northampton were in sight of their third win on their 10th visit to Roots Hall when John Frain and Ian Sampson put them in front against Southend who led through Martin Carruthers. But nine minutes from time Neil Tolson made it 2-2.

It was also 2-2 between Torquay and Plymouth. Sean McCarthy put the Pilgrims in front, Eifion Williams equalised. Paul McGregor restored the lead and United appeared to be heading for defeat until Kevin Hill notched the leveller with 15 minutes left.

Cheltenham and Exeter's first meeting ended with the Grecians deeper in trouble after a 3-1 defeat. Russell Milton put Cheltenham in front, Mike Duff's first career goal and Mark Freeman took the game beyond reach and Jon Gittens merely reduced the arrears.

Carlisle were another club sinking lower as Rochdale clocked up 2-1 away win with goals from Tony Ellis and David Flitcroft. John Durnin, on loan from Portsmouth, had put Carlisle in front.

Chester continued to struggle at the bottom, beaten 2-1 at Mansfield.

Kevin Henderson bagged both Hartlepool's goals as they overcame York 2-1 who had to be satisfied with a 25-yard free-kick from Barry Conlan.

Halifax were back on the winning trail with goals from David Cullen, Graham Mitchell and Jamie Paterson setting up a 3-0 victory over Lincoln.

Kieron Durkan set up a 1-0 away triumph as Shrewsbury were pushed deep into trouble by Macclesfield.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Leeds	19	14	2	3	34	20	44	14
Man Utd	18	13	3	2	48	23	42	25
Sunderland	19	11	4	4	33	22	37	11
Arsenal	19	11	3	5	34	20	36	14
Liverpool	19	10	4	5	28	16	34	12
Tottenham	18	9	3	6	30	22	30	8
Leicester	19	9	2	8	27	26	29	1
Everton	19	7	6	6	33	28	27	5
Chelsea	17	8	3	6	23	18	27	5
Middlesbrough	19	8	3	8	23	26	27	-3
West Ham	18	7	5	6	21	20	26	1
Aston Villa	19	7	4	8	18	20	25	-2
Coventry	19	6	6	7	26	22	24	4
Wimbledon	19	4	10	5	30	32	22	-2
Newcastle	19	5	5	9	30	34	20	-4
Southampton	18	4	5	9	21	29	17	-8
Bradford	18	4	4	10	15	29	16	-14
Derby	19	4	3	12	16	31	15	-15
Watford	19	3	2	14	14	40	11	-26
Sheff Wed	18	2	3	13	16	42	9	-26

ENGLISH DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Man City	24	15	3	6	37	19	48	18
Huddersfield	24	14	5	5	43	24	47	19
Charlton	23	13	5	5	40	25	44	15
Ipswich	24	12	7	5	40	26	43	14
Barnsley	23	13	3	7	45	35	42	10
Stockport	24	11	7	6	31	32	40	-1
Fulham	24	8	12	4	24	18	36	6
Norwich	23	9	7	7	23	21	34	2
Blackburn	23	8	9	6	29	23	33	6
QPR	24	8	9	7	33	30	33	3
Birmingham	23	8	8	7	33	27	32	6
Wolverhampton	23	8	8	7	27	24	32	3
Tranmere	24	9	5	10	34	35	32	-1
Bolton	23	8	7	8	32	27	31	5
Crewe	24	7	6	11	24	31	27	-7
Sheff Utd	24	7	6	11	29	39	27	-10
West Brom	24	5	11	8	23	29	26	-6
Crystal Palace	24	6	8	10	31	38	26	-7
Grimsby	24	7	5	12	24	41	26	-17
Nottm Forest	24	6	7	11	25	29	25	-4
Port Vale	23	5	8	10	26	31	23	-5
Portsmouth	24	5	8	11	26	37	23	-11
Walsall	24	4	7	13	22	39	19	-17
Swindon	24	3	9	12	17	38	18	-21

ENGLISH DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Wigan	22	13	9	0	43	19	48	24
Bristol Rovers	22	14	5	3	30	13	47	17
Preston	22	13	7	2	36	18	46	18
Millwall	23	12	6	5	35	23	42	12
Gillingham	21	12	5	4	40	24	41	16
Burnley	22	11	7	4	30	17	40	13
Notts County	23	11	5	7	35	26	38	9
Stoke	22	10	7	5	33	21	37	12
Brentford	23	10	7	6	34	29	37	5
Bournemouth	23	9	4	10	34	35	31	-1
Bury	22	7	9	6	35	29	30	6
Wycombe	23	7	8	8	27	30	29	-3
Luton	22	8	5	9	26	31	29	-5
Bristol City	22	5	10	7	27	29	25	-2
Oldham	22	6	6	10	24	29	24	-5
Oxford Utd	22	6	6	10	20	28	24	-8
Cardiff	22	5	7	10	24	30	22	-6
Wrexham	22	4	10	8	21	34	22	-13
Scunthorpe	22	5	6	11	22	36	21	-14
Colchester	23	5	6	12	26	46	21	-20
Reading	21	4	6	11	25	40	18	-15
Blackpool	22	3	7	12	22	40	16	-18
Cambridge Utd	22	3	6	13	30	40	15	-10
Chesterfield	22	2	8	12	13	25	14	-12

ENGLISH DIVISION THREE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Barnet	23	13	6	4	34	23	45	11
Rotherham	23	13	5	5	36	14	44	22
Swansea	23	12	5	6	23	14	41	9
Darlington	23	11	7	5	29	16	40	13
Northampton	23	11	5	7	26	19	38	7
Hartlepool	23	11	3	9	30	23	36	7
Torquay	22	10	6	6	28	23	36	5
Macclesfield	23	10	6	7	33	29	36	4
Plymouth	22	9	8	5	30	24	35	6
Peterborough	21	10	4	7	28	27	34	1
Halifax	23	10	4	9	26	25	34	1
Rochdale	22	9	6	7	20	15	33	5
Southend	23	8	6	9	31	34	30	-3
Cheltenham	22	8	5	9	21	20	29	1
Brighton	22	7	7	8	31	27	28	4
Lincoln City	22	7	7	8	32	35	28	-3
Hull	22	7	6	9	20	22	27	-2
Mansfield	21	7	5	9	27	30	26	-3
Exeter	22	7	4	11	24	30	25	-6
York	22	6	7	9	21	29	25	-8
Shrewsbury	23	6	4	13	21	35	22	-14
Carlisle	23	4	7	12	20	37	19	-17
Chester	23	4	4	15	20	42	16	-22
Leyton Orient	22	3	5	14	14	32	14	-18

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Rangers	16	14	1	1	44	13	43	31
Celtic	17	13	0	4	52	15	39	37
Dundee Utd	18	9	3	6	24	26	30	-2
Motherwell	17	7	6	4	28	30	27	-2
Hibernian	19	6	6	7	30	33	24	-3
Hearts	18	5	5	8	26	28	20	-2
St Johnstone	17	5	4	8	17	22	19	-5
Dundee	16	6	0	10	20	27	18	-7
Kilmarnock	17	2	6	9	16	26	12	-10
Aberdeen	17	2	3	12	17	54	9	-37

SCOTTISH DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
St Mirren	19	13	4	2	47	22	43	25
Dunfermline	19	11	7	1	37	16	40	21
Falkirk	19	9	4	6	31	28	31	3
Raith	17	8	5	4	33	26	29	7
Livingston	18	8	5	5	32	25	29	7
Inverness CT	19	5	6	8	24	30	21	-6
Airdrie	19	5	6	8	16	29	21	-13
Ayr	19	5	5	9	19	28	20	-9
Greenock Morton	19	4	4	11	26	35	16	-9
Clydebank	18	0	4	14	12	38	4	-26

SCOTTISH DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Clyde	18	9	5	4	24	13	32	11
Alloa	18	7	9	2	23	18	30	5
Ross County	17	8	4	5	19	15	28	4
Stranraer	18	6	9	3	25	17	27	8
Arbroath	18	7	6	5	30	27	27	3
Stenhousemuir	18	6	4	8	21	24	22	-3
Partick	18	6	4	8	15	19	22	-4
Stirling	18	6	3	9	35	34	21	1
Hamilton	17	4	6	7	18	23	18	-5
Queen of South	18	3	4	11	19	39	13	-20

SCOTTISH DIVISION THREE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Queen's Park	19	11	4	4	32	23	37	9
East Fife	17	10	2	5	23	19	32	4
Forfar	17	7	7	3	30	19	28	11
Berwick	17	8	4	5	27	16	28	11
Cowdenbeath	19	8	4	7	29	23	28	6
Dumbarton	18	8	3	7	29	29	27	0
Montrose	18	6	2	10	22	28	20	-6
East Stirling	17	5	4	8	14	20	19	-6
Brechin	18	5	3	10	22	30	18	-8
Albion	18	2	5	11	18	39	11	-21

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE - ROUND FOURTEEN

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS v SYDNEY UNITED

- 1 Bob Catlin
- 2 Shane Pryce
- 3 Andrew Roberts
- 4 Adam Sanderson
- 5 Todd McManus
- 6 Glenn Sprod
- 7 Travis Dodd
- 8 Mark Wilson
- 9 Chris Tancheski
- 10 John Buonavoglia
- 11 Luke Tomich
- 12 Robert Angievski
- 13 Brad Wiecezorek
- 14 Greg Owens
- 15 Joshua Ferguson
- 16 Vasko Trpceviski
- 17 Paul Wheeler
- 18 Andrew Harper
- 19 Chad Mansley
- 20 Bradley Swancott
- 21 Peter Juchniewicz
- 22 Glen Moore
- 23 Damien Smith
- 30 Jason Kos



- 1 John Crawley
- 2 Ray Younis
- 3 Mark Racker
- 4 Velimir Kupresak
- 5 Eddie Bosnar
- 6 Vince Savocca
- 7 Mirko Jurilj
- 8 Nahuel Arrarte
- 9 Mario Jermen
- 10 Ante Moric
- 11 Tom Pondeljak
- 12 Tom Maric
- 13 Matthew Zec
- 14 Kain Rastall
- 15 Aytac Genc
- 16 Joe Moric
- 17 Nick Bosevski
- 18 Steve Bozinovski
- 19 Greg Saric
- 20 Steve Tolios
- 25 Ante Deak
- 30 Brett Hughes



Venue: Breakers Stadium - Sunday 2 January 2000 7.30PM
Head to Head: Played 15 Breakers wins: 6 United wins: 7 Draws 2

SYDNEY OLYMPIC v PERTH GLORY

- 1 Jim Kourtis
- 2 Scott Thomas
- 3 Chris Zoricich
- 4 Peter Tsekenis
- 5 Scott Baillie
- 6 Ante Juric
- 7 Zlatko Arambasic
- 8 Marcus Phillips
- 9 Pablo Cardozo
- 10 Brett Emerton
- 11 Chris Kalantzis
- 12 Sebastian Sinozic
- 13 Gabriel Mendez
- 14 Lindsay Wilson
- 15 Paul Kohler
- 18 John Kyriazopoulos
- 19 Nick Carle
- 20 George Bouhoutsos
- 21 Lee Miot
- 22 Pete Zorbas
- 23 Dylan Macallister
- 24 Norman Tome
- 25 Hussein Jomaa
- 26 Adam Ciantar
- 30 John Karoubas



- 1 Robert Trajkovski
- 2 Jamie Harnwell
- 3 Vinko Buljubasic
- 4 Gareth Naven
- 5 Scott Miller
- 6 Troy Halpin
- 7 Alistair Edwards
- 8 Bobby Despotoski
- 9 Kasey Wehrman
- 10 Peter Buljan
- 11 Jamos Afkos
- 12 Dion Valle
- 13 Edgar Junior
- 14 Con Boutsianis
- 15 Vas Kalogeracos
- 16 Hamilton Thorp
- 17 John Carbone
- 18 Tony Franken
- 19 Ivan Ergic
- 22 Jason Petkovic



Venue: Belmore Sports Ground - Monday 3 January 2000 6.30PM
Head to Head: Played 6 Olympic wins: 3 Glory wins: 2 Draws 1

NORTHERN SPIRIT v BRISBANE STRIKERS

- 1 John Perosh
- 2 Robert Enes
- 3 Matthew Langdon
- 4 Matthew Bingley
- 5 Mark Rudan
- 6 Luke Casserley
- 7 Robbie Slater
- 8 Tony Perinich
- 9 David Seal
- 11 Troy Cranney
- 12 Simon Catanzaro
- 13 Phillip Moss
- 14 Shane Lyons
- 15 Anthony Faria
- 17 Paul Bilokapic
- 18 Paul Wearne
- 20 Jess Van Stratten
- 21 Michael Cunico
- 22 Paul Henderson
- 23 Adam Snyder
- 24 Elvis Olic
- 25 Ryan Griffiths
- 26 Jack Sobczyk
- 27 Adam Griffiths
- 28 Abbas Saad
- 29 Ian Crook
- 30 Sean Cranney



- 1 Clint Bolton
- 2 Glenn Gwynne
- 3 Shane Stefanutto
- 4 Andrew Davidson
- 5 Matthew Belli
- 6 Brad Ditton
- 7 Shane Smeltz
- 8 David Pilic
- 9 Paul Foster
- 10 Wayne Srhoj
- 11 Greg Di Losa
- 12 Pete Dwyer
- 13 Stuart McClaren
- 14 Jade North
- 15 Leo Langone
- 16 Peter Grierson
- 17 Jeremy Harris
- 18 Nick Meredith
- 19 Wade Baldwin
- 20 Daniel Duke



Venue: North Sydney Oval - Sunday 2 January 2000 7.30PM
Head to Head: Played 2 Spirit: 0 Strikers wins: 1 Draws 1

GIPPSLAND FALCONS v ADELAIDE FORCE

- 1 Bojo Jevdjovic
- 2 Dean Fak
- 3 Manny Gotis
- 4 Mehmed Durakovic
- 5 Jeff Hopkins
- 6 Brian MacNichol
- 7 Andy Vargas
- 8 Clayton Bell
- 9 Robbie Puca
- 10 Sandy Robertson
- 11 John Hutchinson
- 12 Peter Kakos
- 13 Adrian Savage
- 14 Doug Marcina
- 15 Jonathon Buhugiar
- 16 Juan Nilo
- 17 Will Hastie
- 18 Michael Katz
- 19 Ivan Mandic
- 20 Simon Miotto
- 21



- 1 Vilson Knezevic
- 2 Ivan Zelic
- 3 Alex Tobin
- 4 Carlo Talladira
- 5 Damian Mori
- 6 Carl Veart
- 7 Nick Sabljak
- 8 Aurelio Vidmar
- 9 Nathan Day
- 10 John Fusco
- 11 Michael Cartwright
- 12 Louis Brain
- 13 Matthew Kemp
- 14 Angelo Costanzo
- 15 Bradley Hassell
- 16 Dong Ki Kim
- 17 Jonathan Lihou
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23



Venue: Falcons Stadium - Sunday 2 January 2000 7.00PM
Head to Head: Played 15 Falcons wins: 3 Force wins: 7 Draws 5

MARCONI STALLIONS v MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

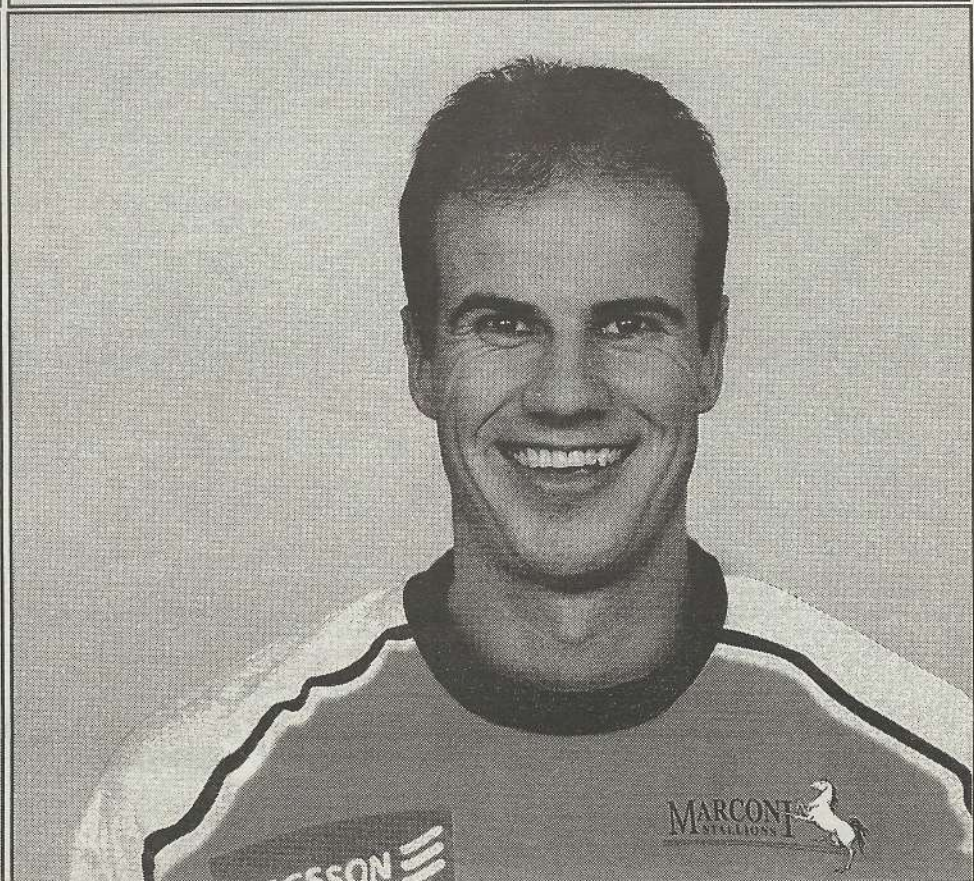
- 1 Michael Turnbull
- 2 Chad Gibson
- 3 Mark Babic
- 4 Dominic Longo
- 5 Pan-Keum Kim
- 6 Christian Care
- 7 Darren McDonald
- 8 Zeljko Babic
- 9 Brad Maloney
- 10 Mike Smith (right)
- 11 Danny Invincible
- 12 Buddy Farah
- 13 Pierluigi di Gia
- 14 Alex Duric
- 15 Francis Awaritefe
- 16 Harry Karl
- 17 Brendan Ranaud
- 18 David Aceski
- 19 Paolo Marchesini
- 20 Kris Trajanovski
- 21 Vlado Zoric
- 22 Josaia Junior Sauturaga
- 23 Daniel Severino
- 26



- 1 Joey Rayher
- 2 Ivan Jolic
- 3 Ante Kovacevic
- 4 Jason Vukadin
- 5 John Didulica
- 6 Mark Silic
- 7 Dragi Nastevski
- 8 Ivan Kelic
- 9 Paul Urlovic
- 10 Mijo Trupkovic
- 11 Murtala Toyin Abbas
- 12 Lance Plunkett
- 13 Paul Magdic
- 14 Ransford Banini
- 15 Alex Kriatzoglou
- 16 Brandon Vassalo
- 17 Roddy Vargas
- 18 Adrian Cervinski
- 19 Martin John
- 20 Zeljko Susa
- 21 Steven Tillinger
- 22 Michael Reda
- 23 Hrvoje Matkovic
- 24



Venue: Marconi Stadium - Sunday 2 January 2000 6.00PM
Head to Head: Played 31 Stallions: 11 Knights wins: 14 Draws 6



LIVE SUNDAY 2 JANUARY 8.00 PM

C7 SPORT CHANNEL 12

**WOLLONGONG WOLVES
V PARRAMATTA POWER**



WOLVES

- 1 Leslie Pogliacomì
- 2 George Souris
- 3 Alvin Ceccoli
- 4 Robert Stanton
- 5 David Cervinski
- 6 Matthew Horsley (below)
- 7 Paul Reid
- 8 Anthony Surjan
- 9 Sasho Dimoski
- 10 Stuart Young
- 11 Scott Chipperfield
- 12 Neil Harlock
- 13 Noel Spencer
- 14 Saso Petrovski
- 15 David Huxley
- 16 Peter Lahanas
- 17 Esala Masi
- 18 Chad Bishop
- 19 Paul Dimech
- 20 Daniel Berltrame
- 21 Christian Zelvis

POWER

- 1 Andrew Crews
- 2 David Barrett
- 3 Michael Santalab
- 4 Steve Eagleton
- 5 Richard Plesa
- 6 Joe Vrkic
- 7 Jacob Burns
- 8 Walter Ardone
- 9 Mile Sterjovski
- 10 Joel Griffiths
- 11 Steve Berry
- 12 Stephen Laybutt
- 13 Milan Blagojevic
- 14 John Angelucci
- 15 Danny Townsend
- 16 Mark Byrnes
- 17 Danny Kukucka
- 18 Lachlan Campbell
- 19 Matt Thompson
- 20 Barney Smith
- 21 Ahmid Elrich
- 23 John Gibson
- 28 Peter Bennett
- 29
- 30 Mike Gibson



Venue: **Brandon Park**
Sunday 2 January 6.30PM
Head-to-Head: N/A
Wolves:
Power:
Draws:



MONDAY 3 JANUARY

C7 SPORT CHANNEL 12

**FOOTBALL KINGZ
V CANBERRA COSMOS**



KINGZ

- 1 Michael Utting
- 2 Che Bunce
- 3 Riki Van Steeden
- 4 Fabio Macolino
- 5 Jonathon Perry
- 6 Marcus Stergiopoulos
- 7 Wynton Rufer
- 8 Chris Jackson
- 9 Fred de Jong
- 10 Dino Mennillo
- 11 Robbie Middleby
- 12 Harry Ngata (below)
- 13 Levent Osman
- 14 Batrum Suri
- 15 Ivan Vicelich
- 16 Lee Jones
- 17 Maciel Edmilson
- 18 Stuart Riddle
- 19 Leigh Kenyon
- 20 Jason Batty
- 21 David Moya
- 22 Aaron Silva
- 23 Simon Eaddy

COSMOS

- 1 David Millin
- 2 Toplica Popovich
- 3 Danny Burt
- 4 Nicholas Purdue
- 5 Jason Polak
- 6 David Winnie
- 8 Daniel Watkins
- 9 Alex Castro
- 10 Michael Musitano
- 11 David Arranz
- 12 Brian Hamilton
- 14 Harry James
- 15 Glen Kolpak
- 16 Ilija Prenzoski
- 17 Robbie Hooker
- 18 Nikola Mrdja
- 19 Geoff Howarth
- 20 Grant Barlow
- 21 Scott Conlon
- 22 Elliot Zwangobani
- 24 PJ Roberts
- 25 Ivo De Jesus
- 26 Gabriel Gonzalez
- 29
- 30 Angelo Konstantinou



Venue: **North Harbour Stadium**
Monday 3 January 6.00PM
Head to Head: N/A
Kingz:
Cosmos:
Draws:



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